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**THE POLITICAL, INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL ROOTS OF THE
IRAQI INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT, 1920**

Wamidh J.O. Nadhmi

**A Thesis Submitted to S.O.S. Durham University
for the Degree of Ph.D.**

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Note on Transliteration

When an Arabic name or word has an accepted form in English, I have normally used it. Other Arabic names and words, I have tried to transcribe them according to the system of the Oriental Library of Durham. I have allowed myself certain alternatives as the omission of the initial hamza and the () for () when in the end of the word or accompanied by (Y). I have made no distinction between ض and ظ

In spite of a considerable effort, it was difficult to be quite accurate. This could be explained by Lawrence's argument¹ and the many difficulties involved in the Arabic vowel system.² I hope that the reader of this work will tolerate such a shortcoming; to assist him I have given, in the bibliography, a translation of Arabic works.

-
1. T.E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, (London, 1963), p.19
 2. 'A. Wardi, Limaḩāt Ijtimā'iyah min Tārīkh al 'Irāq al Ḩadīth, Vol.4, (Baghdad, 1974), pp.3-5

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

During the preparation of this work I have incurred numerous obligations. I am indebted to my parents who have supported this research. I must acknowledge with gratitude Sir John Richmond for his patient supervision. His valuable remarks have reduced my errors and largely contributed to the positive side of this work.

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To the staff and Librarians of the Public Record Office, the British Museum, the School of Oriental and African Library, the Middle Eastern Centre Library at Oxford, Newcastle University Library, London Library, Durham University Libraries, the Libraries of the American University of Beirut, Baghdad University, Baghdad Museum, al Athar, my deepest thanks for their assistance.

My gratitude goes also to Mrs. June Wallis who has patiently and energetically typed this thesis.

During the preparation and writing of this research, I have been profoundly influenced by valuable ideas and advice expressed by persons with knowledge and experience. It is impossible to list all of their names. Words are only a small repayment, but to them I render my deep gratitude. I am, of course, the only one to be blamed for the weak aspects of this work.

Abstract

This work is an attempt to place the events in Iraq in 1920 in their broad historical context. It attempts to trace the factors and forces behind the uprising, and the effect it had on the subsequent socio-political development of Iraq. Socio-economic transformation, western encroachment and Turkish centralisation of the Ottoman Empire were reasons for the gradual dissolution of stagnant conditions, for the growth of national integration and for stimulating mass interest in politics, leading to Arab nationalist awareness among the Iraqi intelligentsia and some tribal leaders.

The British occupation served to accelerate the growth of this awareness. It suppressed the distinction between Islam and nationalism; it handicapped the formation of national institutions and administration; it attempted to arrest the structural changes in the tribally organised rural society and embarked on a policy which was both impractical and provocative.

Strenuous efforts on the part of the militant Iraqi nationalists succeeded in bringing about a nationalist-shi'i-tribal alliance which was the backbone of the 1920 revolt. Although militarily defeated, the rising ruined the obsolete policies of the British civil commissioner and their prospects. The British, being eager to reduce their commitments and yet to retain a predominant influence in Iraq, devised a political formula which satisfied the moderate nationalists and the conservatives who were apprehensive of the more radical political forms which the nationalist movement was assuming.

This work contends that the uprising was a genuine but primitive^{nationalist} movement. Socially it represented the intelligentsia, the unpropertied sheikhs and the leaders of tribal subdivisions who resented the claims, supported by the administration, of the absentee landlords and patriarchal sheikhs. It precipitated the British design for the birth of an Iraqi state.

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CHAPTER I

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

Modern Iraq is the historical outcome of the political, economic and social unification process of the three Ottoman Wilayets: Mosul, Baghdad and Basrah. Such a process was solidified by the policies of the British Government after the First World War and the rise of the independence movement which together led to the formation of the provisional Iraqi government in 1920.

This process started only in the latter half of the 19th century. Before that Iraq was under conditions which hindered the growth of a national awareness and arrested any significant socio-economic or intellectual changes.

The Mongol invasion (1258) had marked the beginning of a new era in Iraq, an era of backwardness and alien domination. The most far-reaching harm that was inflicted on Iraq was the destruction of its irrigation system.¹

The bulk of the country, the vast, fertile and alluvial plain which lay between the two rivers was dependent on the irrigation of the two rivers (Tigris and Euphrates). The rainfall in this zone was both inadequate and untimely. This could not be remedied by a simple system of flood irrigation, simply because the flood season was also untimely.² Furthermore the two rivers carry a high percentage of sediment³ which, without careful supervision, would often lead to blockage of the small rivers. This had led to the desertion of cultivation, encouragement of nomadism and sharp conflicts over the remaining cultivated land. Hence a condition of socio-economic deterioration, inter-tribal wars, towns and commercial decline was to prevail in Iraq.⁴ Under such conditions the growth of a national awareness was hardly likely.

For a successful cultivation the irrigation zone needed a well-kept system

1. W.B. Fisher, The Middle East, (London, 1966), pp.381-2.

2. It was too late for the shitwi (winter products) and too early for the ṣifi (summer products). W. Wilcocks, Irrigation of Mesopotamia, Vol.1, 2nd ed., (London, 1917), p.xii.

3. A. Susa, Faiyḍanāt Baghdād fi al Tārīkh, vol.1, (Baghdad, 1963), pp.147-8.

4. 'A. 'A. al Dourī, Muqadema li Tārīkh al 'Arab al Iqṭisādī, (Beirut, 1969), pp.89-90.

of perennial irrigation. This would require dams to store the spring flood. It would also need some drainage canals to prevent the salination which constantly threatened the soil.¹ Such a system needed above all a stable and devoted government which was competent to keep up the irrigation works.

Such a government by no means existed in Iraq, at least up to the second half of the 19th century. Even afterwards, the reforms which were carried out were modest and ill-managed. Accordingly, the situation continued stagnant. The backwardness was not confined to one aspect of life, but was rather entrenched in every single corner of Iraq's society.

The decline of the population was terrifying. 'Irrigation from the Didjla /Tigris and rain cultivation in the north undoubtedly supported (in medieval times) a population perhaps three times more numerous than that of today, i.e. after a century of rapid growth'.² The decline was due to the recurrence of the plague,³ wars and ill-equipped health services.

Cultivation, apart from the rainfall zone, was restricted to the vicinity of the main towns, particularly in the areas of Shat al 'Arab, Diyāla and Karbala'. Its conditions were very primitive and its production was limited.⁴ Rarely did production exceed local needs and provide a surplus for export. Thus Iraqi trade was, virtually, a transit trade with Iraq playing the role of a commercial station with no indigenous produce to be exported. The transit trade itself was suffocated by the insecurity of trade routes.⁵

The modest industry of Iraq was falling to the minimum. In 1910 the industrial situation of Iraq was described as primitive and in a state of decadence.⁶ The only available education was to learn the Qurān by heart under the guidance of a Muqri'. The first modern school was to open in Baghdād as late

1. W. Willcocks, op. cit., p.xii.

2. C. Issawi, The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914, (Chicago, 1966), p.130.

3. For instance, when plague attacked Baghdad in 1831 its population was 150,000. When the plague was over, Baghdad was left with a population of only 30,000. The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol.1, (London, 1913), p.568.

4. S. Haider, Land problems of Iraq, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, (London Univ., 1942), p.224.

5. S.H. al 'Umari (trans.), Riqlāt Niebuher, (Baghdad, 1954), pp.67-9.

6. Adriano Lanzoni, 'La Mesopotamia economica', Bolletino della Societa Geografica Italiana, (Rome), XLVII (1910), cited by Issawi, op. cit., p.181

as the period of Dāoud Pasha (1817-32).¹

The study of that period of Iraqi history is beyond the scope of this work,² but one could say in short security was low, justice rare, exaction cruel, and policy foolish.³ If one accepts Hegel's notion of history, namely history means man's process of changing his environment and that where there is no change there is no history,⁴ then one is quite justified in arguing that Iraq of that period was of an 'unhistorical history'. One does not need Wittfogel's 'hydraulic Eastern Despotism',⁵ nor Marx's 'Asiatic mode of production'⁶ to become aware of the striking examples of arrested structural change. Longrigg's book provides ample evidence of how Iraqi socio-economic, cultural and political life remained stagnant and without any significant or radical changes.

In the given circumstances, two powers were able to bring about some changes and revive the country; that was the government or the people. However, neither was able to introduce such measures which could provide the preliminary conditions for deliverance from stagnation. Both, the rulers and the ruled, were reluctant and unmotivated to strive for such an end.

The Turkish government conceived Iraq as a mere buffer province on the frontier of the Empire with Shi'i Persia. Baghdad was considered as a place of exile, and the walis sent to govern it were men who had lost favour.⁷ They were expected to raise money from the province and send a certain sum to Istanbul.

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1. G. Kirk, A Short History of the Middle East, (London, 1964), p.105.
 2. For instance see: (i) F. Rosen, Oriental Memories of a German Diplomatist, (New York, 1930); (ii) The Report of Sir Gerard Lowther on 'The General Conditions of Baghdad, Basrah and Mosul, 1908'. Published in G.P. Gooch and H. Temperley (eds.), British Documents on the Origins of War, 1898-1914, Vol.V, (H.M.S.O., 1928); (iii) C.J. Rich, Narrative of a Journey to the Site of Babylonia in 1811, (London, 1839).
 3. S.H. Longrigg, Four Centuries of Modern Iraq, (Oxford, 1925), p.281.
 4. G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History, (New York, 1956), pp.105-6.
 5. K. Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, (London, 1963).
 6. Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formation, (London, 1964).
 7. Between 1879 and 1905, 10 Walis ruled Baghdad. For the same period of time, 17 Walis were assigned to Basrah. Between 1900 and 1914, Basrah saw 30 Turkish rulers.
'A.Q. Bāsh 'Aiyān, Tārīkh al Basrah al Kabīr, (Basrah, Manuscripts, n.d.), Vol.6, pp.12-9

The tenure of Iraq office was deliberately kept short so that the governors would not consolidate their power and be tempted to seek independence.¹

Before Midhat Pasha, reforms had hardly touched Iraq, and even his sincere attempts were often unsuccessful and produced results contrary to his good intentions.² His endeavour to modernise the administration by applying the Ottoman Administrative system had resulted in:

'A numerous class of regular officials, the Effendis, stepped into the place of the old arbitrary Pashas, literate but not otherwise educated, backward but decorous in social habit, uniformed in a travesty of European dress, exact and over-refined in the letter of officialdom, completely remote from a spirit of public service, identifying the body-public with their own class, contemptuous of tribe and cultivator, persistent speakers of Turkish among Arabs and, finally, almost universally corrupt and venal - such were the public servants in whose sole hands lay the functions of governments'.³

The Iraqi mass population was in its turn unable to motivate any radical changes. Some of the influential effendi class, landholders and Mujtahids were in fact opposing any reforms, simply because they had vested interests in the old order and any changes might threaten their privileges. The bulk of the masses feared any innovation because they were the victims of a combination of prejudice, religious fanaticism and ignorance. Thus, change was opposed for fear of departure from Islam.

Furthermore, the people of Iraq lacked a sense of unity and were quite separated and unable to fight collectively for any reforms. The loyalty of the individual was addressed to the religious group, the tribe or the city more than to Iraq as a fatherland. The concept of homeland or nationality, Iraqi or Arab, was ambiguous and ill-defined. Such a national concept, if it had existed, was restricted to narrow circles of groups or individuals.

Ethnically speaking, Iraq was divided into several groups. The Arabs were the majority, forming about 70 per cent of the populace, the Kurds about 15 per cent, the Persians, Turkoman, Turks, Armenians, Yazidis, Sabians and Circassians

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1. A. Jwaideh, 'Midhat Pasha and the Land System of Iraq', St. Anthony's Papers (16), Middle Eastern Affairs (3), (London, 1963), p.111.
 2. A. Blunt, Bedouins of the Euphrates, Vol.1, (London, 1879), pp.195-6.
 3. S.H. Longrigg, Iraq 1900-1950, (London, 1953), p.281.

formed together the remaining three per cent, as shown in the following table:¹

TABLE 1

Arabs	1,650,000	Persians	70,000	Jews	60,000
Kurds	380,000	Syrian Christians	60,000	Circassians	8,000
Turks & Turkomans	111,000	Armenians	57,000	Sabians	2,000
		Yazidis	21,000	Chabaks	10,000
				Miscellaneous	10,000

As far as religion was concerned, the dominant belief was Islam which represented about 90 per cent of the total population. The Jews were a strong minority living in the cities, mainly in Baghdad and Basrah. Their strength was due to their financial skill and the high education which some of them were able to get mainly through their own schools or by sending their children to Europe. The Christians were also concentrated in the big towns of Mosul, Baghdad and Basrah, but, unlike the Jews, they formed some agrarian communities, especially in the province of Mosul. They also had their own schools and, comparatively speaking, received an advanced education. The Jews and Christians were looked on as 'second class citizens' and were deprived of many rights. It was only in 1856 that a decree was promulgated declaring the equality in treatment for all minorities in the Ottoman territories. Knowing the Turkish administration and the prevailing conditions, one is justified in being dubious of the effectiveness of such a decree.

The Iraqi Moslems did not enjoy a strong unity for they, in their turn, were divided into Sunnah and Shi'ah. For historical reasons, Iraq became the centre of Shi'i activities. Thus the Iraqi Shi'ah were subjected to a prolonged persecution at the hands of the Sunni rulers. The conflict between the Sunnah and the Shi'ah assumed an alarming character when Ismā'īl al Safawi, Shah of Persia, was converted to the Shi'i faith (in the early 16th century).⁽²⁾ Henceforward the religious strife between Sunni and Shi'i Iraqis was to take a more violent form with each side being aided by a foreign power, namely the

1. Admiralty War Staff, Intelligence Division, Handbook of Mesopotamia, Vol. 1, 1916, p.66.

2. E. Browne, A literary History of Persia, Vol.IV, (Cambridge, 1953), p.260.

Turks and Persians.¹ However, it should be pointed out that, in certain periods, there were some attempts at reconciliation between the two sects.² Nevertheless, the essence of that period was the bloodshed and religious strife between Iraqi Shi'ah and Sunnah. This historical fact represented a serious barrier to the national unity of the Iraqi Arabs.

Socially, the Iraqi population was divided into three major groups: the nomadic tribes, the rural population (including semi-nomadic and settled tribes) and the townspeople.

The Arab nomads inhabited the desert in the west and south-west of Iraq. The main tribes were the Shammar in the north and al Jazīra, the 'Anizah in the Shāmiyah and al Dulaīm in the south-west of Iraq.

Economically, they were dependent on the camel and Ghazu (looting raids on the trade caravans, neighbouring tribes or cities). They were not a highly productive element in the Iraqi society but formed a great impediment to the growth of inland trade, a threat to security and a prominent challenge to any central government.

In regard to the rural population, the social unit differed according to the system of irrigation and cultivation. In the north, in the rain-fed zone, the social unit was the village. But in the south, which was the Arab populated area and the irrigation zone, the social unit was the tribe and the sense of belonging was tribal. A tribe usually possessed a large area of land called dīra which included the cultivated and uncultivated land in addition to the land covered by water (marshes). The dīra system gave the tribe the right to cultivate any part of the dīra in accordance with its fertility and irrigation.³ The dīra was considered as the property of the tribe as a whole and not as the private property of the sheikh or that clan to which he

1. For instance see: S. al Husri, Al Belād al 'Arabiya wa al Dawla al 'Uthmāniya, (Cairo, 1948), p.40. Also, E. Creasy, History of the Ottoman Turks, (Beirut, 1961), pp.131-2, 256.

2. J. Mahbuba, Mādi al Najaf wa Haderuha, Vol.1, (Najaf, 1958), p.225.

3. H. Jawād, Muqadema fi Takwīn al 'Irāq al Ijtima'i, (Baghdad, 1946), p.44.

belonged. Thus, there was a strong sense of unity among each tribe, which consequently handicapped the growth of a national consciousness. The Turkish authorities provided the tribes with nothing but persistent tax demands. Due to the government's weakness in extending its authority beyond the walls of the towns, the tribe looked for services and protection among themselves rather than from an incompetent government. Experience taught them that when weak they were exposed to the might of the government or even to other tribes. Therefore, the only alternative for them was to build their own fortifications and to solidify their ranks in order to defend themselves against each other as well as against the government. They tended to fortify their positions by unifying themselves into larger groups or confederations. The best known of these confederations was that of the Muntafiq, which occupied the southern part of the country, that is from Qurnah to Samāwah and along the Gharāf river. The unifying force and the leadership was vested in the famous Sa'dun family, who originally came from Najid. The major towns in this area were Shaṭrah and Nāṣiriyah.

The Middle Euphrates or the Ḥillah-Dīwāniyah district, that is the area stretching from Samāwah up to Musaiyib, was held by the Khazā'il confederation's sheikhs who were the virtual rulers of the Middle Euphrates. The units of the Khazā'il were scattered in the area between Kifil, Dīwāniyah and Samāwah. This area was inhabited by other tribes and confederations, not less known for their fighting qualities. Among them was al Fatla which was settled around the two rivers; Mushkhāb and Shāmiyah; another section of the Fatla inhabited the area along the Hindiyyah. The Bani Ḥassan tribe inhabited the area between Karbalā' and Kufah. The Zubaiyid confederation, which comprised the mighty tribe of albu Sulṭān, the Mu'amara and Juḥayah tribes, was settled between the Tigris and Euphrates. The 'Afaj and Dagḥarah tribes inhabited the area around the Dagḥarah river.

The Middle Euphrates area was exceptionally characterised by its strong tribal cohesion. Tribalism was deeply rooted owing to objective and historical

conditions which prevailed in that area. Its eastern half, richly watered by the Daghārah river, produced a powerful tribal cohesion in order to defend its wealth against the government. Its western half was facing the desert and was endangered by the nomadic Ghazu. So, the tribes had no alternative but to solidify their organisation and enhance their tribalism. Two factors which were introduced in the 1860s and 1870s - the river steamers and tāpu sanads, which played a major role in weakening the tribal organisation elsewhere in Iraq, were very ineffective in the Middle Euphrates as we are going to see in the coming pages.

Along the Tigris from Qurnah to Baghdad was the area of 'Amārah which formed a rich land bordering Persia and was inhabited by albu-Muhammad, Bani Lām, Rabi'ah and Shammar Tuqah.

From Musaiyib to Rumādi and along the Euphrates lived Zuba', Bani Tamīm and al Janābiyin. Further to the north lived al Dulaīm. Along the Tigris from Baghdad to Mosul lived the 'Abīd and Shammar Jarbah; around the Diyāla river and north to Baghdad lived Bani Tamīm and al 'Izza.¹

The economic structure of the settled tribes was the collective ownership of the land or dīra. They used to divide its produce in an equal way between every clan or section of the tribe according to the number of their individuals. The sheikh was not considered as a landholder or tax collector. However, he used to receive a higher portion of the produce, but that was merely to cover his charges for keeping a Mudif (guest house) which was devoted to the use and the vanity of the whole tribe. The sheikh had also to spend some money on his hoshiyah or Sibyān (bodyguard) to protect his prestige.

At the head of each tribe was a prominent and acknowledged member of the ruling house. The sheikh was usually assisted by a tribal council to solve the problems facing the tribe as a collective body, and a judicial council to solve the inter-tribal problems according to the unwritten law of tribal customs and tradition.

The tribal system based on a deep-rooted economic structure (collective

1. On Iraqi tribes see 'A. al 'Azzāwi, 'Ashā'r al 'Irāq, 4 vols., (Baghdad, 1937-1956).

ownership and subsistence economy) and preserved by the prevailing objective conditions (corrupt and weak government and lack of security) had produced certain values and social relations among its members who were bound together by ties of blood, prejudice and the unwritten tribal code of law and morality. The tribe was the major social unity or group to which the loyalty of the individuals was addressed. Such a system hindered the growth of national consciousness and was a barrier to the growth of a unified Iraqi market and a permanent challenge to any central authority in Iraq. Yet another division was the

'... sharp distinction between the townfolk and the Arabs, ... the balance has to be held between the shrewd educated townsmen who in days of misrule trusted to his wits for his fortune, and the intelligent but uneducated Arab who relies on his power of defiance....'(1)

The Turkish government, alarmed by these threats to its authority, reacted with two policies intended to counteract the strength of the tribal system.

'Divide and rule' was the favourite Turkish tactic; direct military campaigns aimed at the subjection of the tribes by force was the other. This policy took the following forms:

1. Agitating one tribe against the other, either by confiscating the land from one tribe and allotting it to another or by taking sides in the inter-tribal wars. (Shibli Pasha, the Mutaşirif of Dīwāniyah took the land from the Khazā'il and gave it to al Fatla (part of this land was the rich Mushkhāb). This action led to fierce fighting between the two tribes and their allies. The Turks sided with al Fatla and moved troops to intimidate the Khazā'il.⁽¹⁾ Ironically enough, after a short period, al Ibrāhīm was encouraged to refuse to pay revenue to al Fatla for a land which belonged to the latter. This, in its turn, led to new clashes and fights.⁽²⁾).

2. Raising jealousy and rivalry among the one tribe by replacing the recognised sheikh by another, either of the same family or from a different one.

3. To alienate the sheikh from his tribe, the Turks started a policy of appointing some of the sheikhs as official governors of their units. This resulted in turning the sheikh from a leader of his tribe into a tax collector and a

1. W.'Atiyah, Tārīkh al Dīwāniyah, (Najaf, 1954), pp.61-6

2. 'A.Sh. Al Yāsiri, Al Buṭula fi Thawrat al 'Ashrīn, (Najaf, 1967), pp.61-4.

government representative.¹

4. The Turks did not refrain from using sheer military force to subjugate the tribes. The Middle Euphrates alone saw at least fifteen military campaigns waged against several tribes in the period between 1850-1915.²

This short-sighted policy brought to Iraq nothing but destruction. Iraq was turned into a battlefield for the inter-tribal wars on land or water and was torn by the tribal-governmental clashes which caused a great deal of harm to the country. The flow of blood was profuse but the results were shallow. The tribal system was not an evil accident; it was the outcome of concrete historical and objective conditions. Only by preparing the ground economically and administratively, could an effective detribalisation policy be worked out. The outcome of Turkish policy was in most respects a miserable failure. It is undeniable that they succeeded in weakening this tribe or that sheikh, but the overall effects of their policy did not result in breaking down the tribal system as such. The tribesmen, faced with such ruthlessness, found in many cases their only refuge in their tribal organisation. It could be argued that before Midhat Pasha's introduction of the tāpu system, the Turkish policy was unwittingly strengthening the tribal organisation.

Anyhow, the wheel of history was turning. A series of events were in operation inside and around Iraq which sowed the seeds of change. The period of Dāoud Pasha (1817-1832), witnessed the establishment of the first factories producing military equipment and clothes, the first water pump³ and the first printing press.⁴ Dāoud also put an end to 'feudal' influence of the Bābāns in Sulimāniyah and of the al Jalīlī in Mosul who were a serious threat to any form of centralised Government.⁵ After the third Turkish occupation in 1831, the detribalisation policy of the Turks was accelerated with less failures, due to

1. S.H. Longrigg, Iraq . . . , op. cit., p.292

2. F.M. al Fir'on, Al Ḥaqā'iq al Nāsiya'a fi al Thawra al 'Irāqiya sanat 1920, Vol.1, (Baghdad, 1952), pp.27-8.

3. S. Fāiq, Tārīkh Baghdād, Arabic translation by M.K. Nourris, (Baghdad, 1962), p.61

4. G. Kirk, op. cit., p.105

5. 'A. R. al Bazzāz, Al 'Iraq min al Ihtilāl heta al Istiqlāl, 3rd. ed., (Baghdad, 1967), pp.27-8

the new military methods and the introduction of artillery against the tribes. Midhat Pasha, the Wali of Baghdad (1869-19³72), applied a series of reforms which had a profound effect on Iraq, the most outstanding of which was the tāpu system. In 1870, Midhat enforced a certain degree of centralised unity in the country by reforming the administrative system. In 1868 Iraq was connected by cable lines to the neighbouring countries including India,¹ and in 1878 Turkish post offices started to operate.² In 1864 river steamers started to sail on the Tigris; five years later the Suez Canal was opened. All these factors paved the way for new changes in Iraq. But the most important of them were the growth of foreign trade and the tāpu system of land registration.

1. The Growth of Iraqi trade and related aspects

Before the second half of the 19th century Iraqi trade was very limited. In its volume it was no more than equivalent to one hundred thousand Iraqi dinars. It was mainly of foreign origin. Except for dates and a few wool materials, Iraq had no local products to be exported.³ Thus commercial activity was largely a transit trade with Iraq being a mere commercial station.⁴ Furthermore Iraqi trade was confined to the neighbouring countries rather than with Europe.⁵

However, in the second half of the 19th century there occurred a rapid expansion of Iraqi export trade.⁶ This was accompanied by a noticeable growth in the export of the Iraqi indigenous products.⁷

The rapid growth of Iraqi trade was organically linked to the series of changes which Iraq was undergoing at the beginning of the last century, namely

1. S.H. Longrigg, Four Centuries ..., op. cit., pp.296-297.

2. Ibid.

3. J.B. Rousseau, Description de pachalik de Baghdad, (Paris, 1809), pp.117-22. Cited by C. Issawi, op. cit., p.136.

4. Ibid.

5. H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society and the West, Vol.1, Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century, Part 1, (London, 1957), p.304

6. 1864-1871 Iraqi exported amounted to 147 thousands I.D. During 1888-1895 it increased to 1,272,000 I.D. and in 1912-1913 it totalled 2,960 I.D. M.S. Hassan, Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq; 1869-1939, Ph.D. thesis, (Oxford Univ. 1958), table 1, p.42.

7. C.O.696/3. Customs Administration Report for the Year 1920, p.1.

the subjection of the tribal leaders to government authority, the detribalisation policy of Ottoman authorities, the unification of the Iraqi wilayats around the Baghdad axis in the 1830s, the application of the Ottoman Wilayat system in Iraq in 1870, the economic and administrative reforms of Midhat Pasha, especially the introduction of the tāpu system which generated radical changes in the system of land ownership.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had a strong impact on the Iraqi economy. By reducing the costs and the duration of the journey it encouraged a large leap in Iraqi trade.

Iraqi trade was also encouraged by a series of changes in the Ottoman trade policy. Before 1838 Turkey was imposing high customs duties which hindered foreign trade. In 1838 this policy was changed through several conventions imposed by Britain and other European countries. According to these conventions import duties of 5 per cent and export duties of 12 per cent were to be levied. In 1861 the 1838 conventions were replaced by new ones raising import duties from 5 per cent to 8 per cent, lowering export duties from 12 per cent to 8 per cent and making the latter subject to an annual reduction of 1 per cent, beginning in 1869.¹ Between 1900 and 1911 the British Government firmly opposed any Turkish attempt at the increase of import duty.² In July 1907 Turkey was allowed to raise its import duties to 11 per cent and in 1914 the import duty was raised to 15 per cent. During the First World War, the import duty was again raised to 30 per cent, but because of the British occupation this was not enforced in Iraq.³ The British started a completely new policy.

Another factor which had contributed to the expansion of trade and to the major economic and social development in Iraq was the introduction of river steamers and river communications.

The first two steamers (Baghdād and Baṣra) arrived in 1857. In spite of the public having a half-interest, the two Walis would not accept private freight.⁴

1. S. Himadeh, The Economic System of Iraq, (Beirut, 1938), cited by Issawi, *op. cit.*, pp.188-189.

2. E. Earle, Turkey, the Great Powers and the Baghdad Railway; a Study in Imperialism, (New York, 1924), pp.226-9.

3. M.S. Hassan, *op. cit.*, pp.343-344. (Arabic)

4. S.H. Longrigg, Four Centuries ..., *op. cit.*, p.294.

The boats were used for transport of troops and postal services only. In 1867, Nāmiq Pasha added three more ships (Moṣul, Riṣāfa and Furāt) to the fleet and organised the service on a commercial basis under the name of 'Oman Ottoman Administration'. He also built a repair shop.¹

In April 1861 another navigation company was founded in London under the name 'The Euphrates and Tigris Steamship Navigation Company' by H.B. Lynch. The Lynch family had, in 1831, established a commercial house in Baghdad.² The British Company started with a modest capital of £15,000.³ In spite of political opposition by some walis and Iraqis and economic competition from the Oman Ottoman Company, the British service gained ground. Apart from having bigger and better boats, it was subsidized by the Indian government and was further assisted by having a virtual monopoly of carrying the imports from India and Great Britain when they arrived at Basrah and of handling the export trade of British firms in Iraq.⁴

The British company, aided by the British authorities and the objective conditions prevailing in Iraq, paved the way for its commercial hegemony and the penetration of British economic interests and influence in Iraq. Its capital was increased to £100,000 just before the First World War and it jumped to £300,000 in 1919.⁵

As early as 1868, Commander Lynch asserted that the trade between India and the ports of the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates had increased in an extraordinary degree since the expedition first drew attention to these countries.⁶

In March 1914, there was a merging of the Lynch interests with those of Lord Inchape, who already controlled the Peninsular and Oriental, British India

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1. H. Shiha, La Province de Baghdad, (Cairo, 1908). Cited by S. Haider, op. cit., p.265.
 2. H.L. Hoskins, British Routes to India, (New York, 1928), p.424.
 3. 'The Story of the Euphrates Company', The Near East and India, XLI (1935). Cited by Issawi, op. cit., p.148
 4. S. Haider, op. cit., p.266.
 5. 'The Story of the Euphrates Company', cited by Issawi, op. cit., pp.148-53.
 6. F.R. Chesney, Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition, (London, 1868), p.357. Also, H. Hoskins, op. cit., p.426.

and other steam navigation and industrial enterprises in the East. 'This merger led to a new agreement with Turkey which further safeguarded the British interest'.¹

However, this growing British financial penetration was received with Iraqi resentment. It was reported that the notables of Baghdad had assembled in late 1909 and raised a petition against the renewal of the company's farṁān. They even offered to pay full expenses for the abolition of such rights to the British company.²

The steamboats greatly reduced both the length of the journey and the freight rates, and facilitated the rapidly growing volume of foreign trade. Sailing time up stream from Basrah to Baghdad was reduced to 4-5 days, compared to 40-60 days by local craft or sailing ship.³ In 1866 the cost of transport on the Tigris was 150 piastres per ṭaghār (2,690 pounds) but on the Euphrates, where steamboats could not be employed, the average cost was 200 piastres.⁴

The impact of river transport was not restricted by the expansion of trade. It played a decisive role in the process of tribal settlement. It eased the subjection of the tribes by sheer military force, by enabling the troops to use the new river communications, and, furthermore, it encouraged the tribes to depend on agriculture by providing them with a profitable outlet for their agrarian produce. Knowing that at that time the Euphrates, for several reasons, was not used for navigation, it is not surprising then to notice that the Tigris tribes were subjugated long before those of the Euphrates. The river steamers helped effectively in breaking down the tribal links based on subsistence economy by producing the profit factor thus shifting the Iraqi economy into a market one. Its absence from the Euphrates led to the continuation of the tribal system in that area.

1. E. Earle, op. cit., pp.258-60.

2. Ṣadā Bābil, Vol.1, No.20, 31st December 1909.

3. H.L. Hoskins, op. cit., p.427.

4. S. Haider, op. cit., p.267.

But this was not a one-sided influence. The settlement of the tribes and the growth of trade, in their turn, had a favourable impact on river boats. It is obvious that the development in modern river communication, by the foreign companies became possible simply because it was profitable.¹ That could be explained by two factors: the increase in the European demand for Iraqi food stuffs and raw materials, and the availability of land and manpower in Iraq which enabled it to produce and export the requisite materials.

The importance of 'The Euphrates and Tigris Navigation Co.' lies also in the fact that it was the first embodiment of British economic interest which had penetrated Iraq and competed successfully with the other company, although it was protected by the official authorities ruling Iraq.

The shift in Iraqi trade direction: The growth of Iraqi export trade was accompanied by a radical shift in its direction. The Middle East was no longer the predominant receiver of Iraqi exports. Britain and its Empire were gradually but steadily replacing the Middle East markets. By the end of the last century and beginning of the current one, most of Iraqi sea-borne exports were heading towards Europe, while only a small and rather decreasing amount was exported to other countries including the Ottoman Empire. In contrast to Iraqi overland trade, its sea-borne trade played a dynamic role in Iraqi economic development.

The Iraqi overland trade was directed North through Mosul to Turkey, west to Syria, especially Aleppo, east to Iran and also from Baghdad to Damascus through the western desert, from Zubair, Najaf, and Suq el Shiyukh to the bedouin tribes in the Arabian desert. The export trade using these land routes was not only low in its value but also decreasing gradually.

The improvement in sea and river navigation, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal, the growth of the European and local commercial companies and the increase in European demand for Iraqi food stuffs and raw materials were all factors which had helped in diverting the Iraqi trade from the Middle East to Europe.²

1. H. Shiha, op. cit., cited by M.S. Hassan, op. cit., p.412.

2. Such a trend was clearly shown in M.S. Hassan's work, op. cit., pp.128-131.

Of the total Iraqi exports during the period 1909-11 the percentage distribution to the world market was as follows:¹

United Kingdom	30	Belgium	1.6
India	18	United States	7
France	14	Other countries	22.6
Germany	7		

Ghanīmah wrote that in 1909 33.4 per cent of Iraq's expts were going to Britain and 58.8 per cent of its imports were coming from Britain.²

Thus the British, who started their first commercial relations with Basrah in 1635 with a very small investment by the East India Company,³ were, in 1763 to open a branch of this company in Basrah which became the principal British station in the Gulf area.⁴ And since that date the British commercial interest was ever growing in Iraq; while Turkish economic links were dropping to the minimum.⁵

The Components of Iraqi Trade: The statistics of Iraqi export components show an absolute and relative increase in exporting agricultural goods and that agrarian products were gradually taking the lead as the main Iraqi exports. Iraq's chief exports were dates, wheat, barley (agricultural goods), wool, skins, and live animals (animal products). In 1878 agricultural exports formed 49 per cent of Iraq's total exports, while pastoral exports were 51 per cent. In 1912-1913, agricultural goods represented 80 per cent of the total export while pastoral exports dwindled to only 20 per cent.⁶

This shows us that the growth of agriculture (due to tribal settlement) and expansion of trade had a mutual and favourable impact on each other. It again indicates that agricultural products were no longer aimed at the narrow needs of the tribe, but they were produced to satisfy the needs of the market.

1. M.S. Hassan, op. cit., p.134

2. Y. Ghanīmah, Tijāret al 'Irāq Qadimen wa Hadithen, (Baghdad, 1922), p.100.

3. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Vol.1, Historical Part 1B. (Gregg International Publishers Ltd., 1970), p.1188.

4. Ibid., p.1232

5. S. Haider, op. cit., Extract from Appendix XI, p.703 and Appendix XII, p.704.

6. M.S. Hassan, op. cit., Extracts from table 5, p.61.

The Expansion of Import Trade: The growth of exports provided the country with the hard currency and financial ability which helped the expansion of import trade. This was encouraged also by the reduction in costs and prices of imported goods owing to the opening of the Suez Canal, the improvement of Basrah port and the establishment of river communications.

In this trade one could notice an absolute and relative increase in the importing of productive goods (especially irrigation pumps) and an absolute increase but relative decline in the consumer goods.¹ This indicates that the growth of trade helped and was accompanied by improving agricultural conditions for a higher rate of production.

One also notices the ever increasing proportion of Iraq's imports coming from Britain and its Empire. By 1920 the total share of the British Empire from the Iraqi imports was around 75 per cent.²

The Socio-Political Impact of the Iraqi Trade: The impacts and results of the Iraqi trade expansion and shift of direction could be summed up by the following points:

1. Customs duties were the second main source in Iraq's public revenue and formed 20-25 per cent of it. With the growth of Iraq's foreign trade, the duties which were levied brought much higher revenue to the state, in spite of the fact that the duties were reduced.³
2. The increasing exchange of trade with Britain and the British Empire had linked the Iraqi economy to the British, developing British economic interests which had translated themselves into political ones.
3. The control of Iraqi trade by British firms had generated two attitudes among the Iraqi mercantile class, namely, those who integrated themselves within the general framework of British financial control became socially and politically

1. In 1864-65 total Iraqi imports were £318,900, of which 63.9 per cent were consumer goods and 24.9 per cent productive imports. In 1912-1913, Iraqi imports jumped to £3,467,600, of which 55.6 per cent were consumer goods and 38.6 per cent productive goods.

Ibid., table 25, p.251.

2. Ibid., pp.253-261; also C.O.696/3, Customs Reports, op. cit., pp.1-28.

3. Y. Sarkis, Mabāḥeth 'Irāqiya, (Baghdad, 1948), pp.126-207.

supporters of the British political hegemony over Iraq. The others who suffered from the British strong commercial competition became one of the main sources of discontent and political agitation against British authority.

4. The most important effect of Iraq's foreign trade was on the economic structure of the society, its social components and the land system. The vast expansion of Iraqi foreign trade had played an important role in transferring its economy from natural or subsistence economy, that is to say, from animal and agrarian production for the sake of self-consumption to the commercial production for the sake of the market and profit. In short, from subsistence to market economy. This, in its turn, paved the way for the transformation of the land system, from the communal and tribal system of ownership into new forms of land ownership (mainly private). It also helped in decreasing the number of the Bedu and increasing the number of the shepherds. Also it facilitated the growth in the number of settled peasants. It encouraged the expansion in commercializing agriculture (i.e. cultivation for the sake of local market and exportation). It hastened the downfall of the tribal system of land ownership and the advent of private land ownership. It is obvious that these results were organically linked to each other, each, in its turn, helping and opening the door for the other.

All those factors were to pave the way for the rise of a national awareness.

The development of a profit economy was to link the cultivating tribes with the towns. A process which was enhanced by the progress of river communications and the governmental attempts at centralization measures. Events and developments in parts of Iraq were assuming more relevance to other parts, however remote they might have been. The decay of subsistence economy and its twin tribal isolation was a sign that a new era was gradually replacing the old one.

Two points, of relevance to this work, accompanied this process. The socio-economic developments were not very profound. Thus their political product represented in the rise of political and national awareness was, in its turn, of a modest character. It remained in an embryonic, perhaps primitive, form.

Such a socio-political development was, since its birth, linked to the growing interests of the British Empire both in the area and in Iraq. The growth of Arab nationalism in Iraq was, thus, in constant interaction, of both negative and positive character, with British imperialism.

2. The Settlement of the Tribes and the Population Movement

The growth of trade, the expansion of agriculture, the improvement in security, the introduction of land tāpu system and river transport, were factors of profound importance to Iraqi society and their direct effect was to encourage the settlement of the tribes.. Indeed, that was taking place in a clear pattern. The purely nomadic tribes of Iraq had formed in 1867 about 35 per cent of the total population.¹ By 1930 Sir Henry Dowson asserted that their number was reduced to only 7 per cent.² The movements in the composition of population tend to show the general trend of the socio-economic activity of a given society. An examination of the Iraqi population movements would show us clearly the changes in the socio-economic structure of Iraq. Table IV in Dr. Hassan's article is a good illustration of these changes.³

TABLE Changes in the Nomadic-Urban composition of Population 1867-1930
(thousands)

Date	Nomadic	per cent of total	Rural	per cent of total	Urban	per cent of total	Total
1867	450	35	525	41	310	24	1,280
1890	433	25	963	50	430	25	1,826
1905	393	17	1,324	59	533	24	2,250
1919							2,848
1930	234	7	2,246	68	808	25	3,288

This indicates that Iraq was developing into a rural society, rather than nomadic or urban.

The changes in the structure of Iraqi population have been linked to the economic development mentioned in relation to the growth of Iraqi trade:

1. Baghdad, Consular Trade Report. Sir A.B. Campbell 'Estimation of Iraqi population in 1867', cited and ammended by M.S. Hassan, op. cit., p.52.
2. H. Dowson, Inquiry into Land tenure and other related questions in Iraq, (London, 1931), p.12.
3. M.S. Hassan, 'Growth and Structure of Iraq's Population 1867-1947', Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics, XX, 1958.

'The introduction of European sea and river transport ushered in the decline of tribal population and the fall of the "medieval" Middle Eastern caravan trade. This contributed to the rise of the rural population, and the expansion of Iraq-European-cum-Indian export trade. While this increase in foreign trade added to the commercial part of the urban population the consequent rise in the European imports destroyed the local handicraft industries and thus helped to keep the urban population relatively constant till the early 1930'.¹

In the first period of the economic development and population movements, the shift from nomadic population into rural was tending more to the practice of pastoral than agricultural, i.e. the nomads were becoming rural, but as stock-breeders more than cultivators. Thus, in the south of Iraq, the tribal life continued, because pastoral was more secure and profitable than agriculture.²

However, this phenomenon did not last for very long; the fortification of government authority and the establishment of relative security had deprived the shepherds of their former ability to evade taxes on their animals, (kuda).

The European demand for Iraqi products was shifting from wool to food stuffs.

So was the introduction of the ṭāpu system and the gradual growth of privately owned agrarian land. All were factors in removing the advantage of stock breeding over agriculture, and so the door was open for a new shift in the structure of population - this time from stock-breeding to cultivation.

3. The Land Problem

After a series of ruthless but unsuccessful campaigns against the Iraqi tribes,³ Midhat Pasha was the first Turkish official to recognise his mistaken policy⁴ and that the land system was the major factor in determining the tribal-government relation. In 1870 he tried to apply in Iraq the Ottoman Land Code of 1858. To examine the motives, practice and consequences of his policy, one needs to be aware of the historical background of the land system so as to examine the new changes against it:

1. C. Issawi, op. cit., p.160

2. D. Warriner, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East, (London, 1957), p.117.

3. Sādiq al Damalouji, Midhat Pasha, (Baghdad, 1953), pp.33-36. Also, W. al 'Aṭīyah, Tārīkh al Diwāniyah, (Najaf, 1954), pp.51-53; also Y.K. al Hilli, Tārīkh al Hillah, Vol.1, (Najaf, 1965), p.140.

4. S. Fāiq, Tārīkh al Muntafiq, trans. to Arabic by M. Kh. al Nāṣrī, (Baghdad, 1961), pp.63-37.

'On their occupation of Iraq, the Ottomans abolished the military fiefs of the Mongols and substituted the Royal Domains Arazi Miriyyah. Hence most of the lands of Iraq became of this category. Real estates, the owners of which could produce valid title deeds, Hujjah Shariyyah, to testify the fact they were Kharajiyah or Ushriyyah land, were however left in the hands of their owners as Mulk. Similarly religious endowments were recognised as Waqf. The remainder was either divided into fiefs or farmed out or was retained by the tribes and hereditary chieftains under the local system of tenure. Hence Iraq during this period (1525-1831) reflected both the civil and military feudal system while at the same time retaining the Islamic institution of private ownership (Mulk) religious endowments (Waqf) as well as tribal tenure'.¹

The system of land ownership in regard to the tribal lands was ambiguous and produced sharp disputes between the Turks and the tribes. According to the Islamic regulations, which were enforced in Iraq after the Islamic conquest, the land was considered mulk (or privately owned) and was divided into two categories: Kharājīyah (or tribute paying) and 'Ushriyah (tithe paying). But for one reason or another, the Turks had passed nearly all the land into the category of Mīri² (state owned land). So in theory the government was claiming ownership over these lands, but in practice it was far from being able to make its claim effective.

The tribes categorically denied such a claim. Their possession of the lands was not based on grants or written documents; they had possessed these lands either by sheer force and conquest or by settling on and cultivating them when they were still unoccupied. The land in the irrigation zone, which consisted of, for the greater part, central and southern Iraq, was held under a system of corporate ownership. The individual Fēllāh was cultivating his land by virtue of his membership of the tribe. The ownership of the dīra rested on the capacity of the tribe as a whole to defend it, and the dīra was considered to belong jointly to all the members of the tribe. Although the sheikh used to get a larger portion of the produce or revenue, he had to spend it on the welfare of the tribe.

The cultivated land was divided into units of farming called qit'a, which were supervised by subtribal chiefs or Serkāls. The job of the Serkāl was to

1. S. Haider, op. cit., p.171.

2. A. Jwaideh, op. cit., p.118.

look after the plot by fixing the dates of sowing and harvesting, maintaining the irrigation works, dividing the qit'a into smaller units and providing the money and seeds. The plot in its turn was divided into smaller units called Faddān on which a group of farmers used to work and this group usually consisted of 4-8 men called Jauq. These men divided between themselves the labour of cultivation but harvested collectively and shared the crop.¹

The government, in spite of its claim on the land, was never able to practice the right of ownership. The government was unable to choose the tenants or control the regime of cultivation and only in favourable conditions did it hope to obtain its legal share in rent or tax. The government had no alternative but to recognise the realities of tribal practice, 'but at no time were these customs codified into written law or explicitly recognised as the law of the land; it was as if the government was jealously preserving the prerogatives of ownership until such time as it might be able to make its claim effective'.²

Midhat Pasha started applying the Ottoman Land Code in Iraq to strengthen his detribalisation policy. Under the provision of the code, it would be possible to allocate the miri land to the actual cultivator of it, and thus to give him a vested interest in the land. Midhat, by adopting such a policy, intended that this would transfer the semi-nomadic tribes into a permanent settlement based on cultivation and by that they would be more amenable to government control. By making land ownership depend on a written document, Midhat aimed at the abolition of the inter-tribal wars over disputed lands and the replacement of the sheikh as a land granting authority by the authority of the state. By this means Midhat envisaged that he would make the tribesmen directly responsible to the state and by-pass the sheikh, which, in its turn, would be a considerable blow to the tribal system. By distributing the land among its cultivators, Midhat aimed to abolish the collective tribal ownership and replace it with individual and private ownership, which, Midhat thought, would shatter the tribal system by hitting its 'Achilles' heel'. All that would lead to the prosperity of the people, greater revenue for the state,

1. C. Issawi, op. cit., p.163.

2. A. Jwaideh, op. cit., pp.118-119.

security and order and, above all, would break down the tribal system and quicken the disintegration process among the tribes.¹

The fundamental aim of the Ottoman Land Code as it was applied in Iraq can be summarised as the universal alienation of the taşarruf of cultivated state land to small cultivators, by either confirming precriptive rights to the land and regulating them where they exist or, as in the case of sale of land by auction and revival of dead land, by creating them where they do not exist'.²

The Ottoman Land Code recognised five categories of land in Iraq:

1. Mulk,³ being land in which the absolute rights of private ownership were recognised and the owner had an absolute freehold on the land.
2. Mīri or Arāḍi Amīriyah,⁴ (state-owned land). This was divided into two kinds; one was pure mīri in which no act of alienation had ever taken place. The other was a state land of which the Government had by a deed known as ṭāpu Sanad, given rights of occupancy to a private person on certain general conditions. Such land was commonly known as ṭāpu land or, more rarely, was referred to as Mulk.⁵ In this land, the right of taşarruf (usufruct) was given to the person holding the Sanad, but the raqaba (final ownership or servitude) remained vested in the state.
3. Waqf⁶ (religious endowments).
4. Metrukah,⁷ a land which was left for the use of all people, whilst its ownership belonged to the state.
5. Mawāt,⁸ a land which was deserted and unused.
6. There was a sixth kind of land at the time of the British occupation of Iraq

1. Ali Haider Madhat, The Life of Madhat Pasha, (London, 1903), p.50.

2. S. Haider, op. cit., p.508.

3. 'Sh. Nāṣir, Qawānīn al Arḍ wa al Amlāk ghair al Mangula, (Baghdad, 1942), p.8.

4. Ibid., p.19.

5. F.O.371/4150/5395. Revenue Circular, Baghdad, 29th May 1919, p.1.

6. 'Sh. Nāṣir, op. cit., p.40.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

and that was Arādi Sanniyah, or Mudawwarah, or lands formerly comprising the domains of the Crown and afterwards were transferred to the general revenue.¹

According to the Ottoman Land Code, the authorities were prepared to recognise a prescriptive right to the ownership of land but only to those who could prove haq qarār which included not only continual personal occupation of the land, but also its cultivation² for a minimum period of ten years. Such conditions could hardly be met by the tribesmen. According to the collective nature of the tribal ownership, no land was cultivated by one tribesman for such a long time. Furthermore, although the area of the dīra was, broadly speaking, fixed, the qit'a and faddān shifted constantly because of the salination, exhaustion of soil, frequent floods, shifting rivers or silted up canals.

Since the recognition of established rights was out of the question as far as the tribesmen were concerned, the creation of such rights was necessary in order to meet the situation. Midhat Pasha, being aware of the problem, offered the tribesmen a tāpu sanad by the payment of badal mithel or purchase price which was also called Mu'ajjala (a fee paid in advance).

The Code was clear in defining the rights and obligations of the tāpu holder (Mellāk), who acquired legal possession of the land, while the final ownership rested with the government. The law stipulated further that the tenure of mīri land was conditional on their cultivation, and that should it be left for three or more years, all claims to it would be lost.³

The attempt was ambitious. Had it been carried out properly, Iraq would have acquired a genuine social and progressive revolution with far-reaching and favourable potentialities. But the Iraqi tribalism and Ottoman administration were far removed from providing such an attempt with the fundamental conditions for realising success.

The Turkish administration, being underpaid, inexperienced and lacking a

1. Revenue Circular, op. cit., p.1.

2. S. Haider, op. cit., p.508, Article 2 of the Instruction concerning tāpu administration in the Vilayets.

3. S. Fisher, Ottoman Land Code, (London, 1919). Art.9, p.6; also art.68, p.24. The exceptions from this rule were: (1) resting the soil; (2) flood; (3) imprisonment (of war).

proper survey of land, was unable to achieve the desired ends.¹ 'Sanads were sometimes issued for lands which overlapped, sometimes duplicated in respect of identical properties, and sometimes issued for great areas of land for which the government had neither the right nor the intention to grant tenancies. This resulted in considerable loss of revenue and was contrary to the government's policy, laid down both in the law and in directives to Tāpu officials, that lands should be allocated to the actual cultivators'.²

The major aim of Midhat Pasha's policy, namely the allotment of land to small farmers and the changing of tribesmen into owners of their land, was completely evaded. It was beyond the capacity of the individual tribesman to provide sufficient money (Mu'ajjalāh) to obtain a tāpu sanad. On the other hand, the Ottoman Land Code prevented communal ownership,³ thus depriving the tribe, as a collective body, from purchasing the land. The tribesmen were reluctant to purchase sanads because they thought it would bring taxation on them and they suspected that the obtaining of sanads would subject them to conscription. Above all, the tribesmen did not see any reason to purchase a land of which they were already in full and actual possession, and which had been gained and retained by force.

The hesitation and reluctance of the tribesmen to obtain the tāpu sanads left the way open to the high ranking administrators, city merchants and some clever sheikhs to purchase the lands and get hold of the sanad. Those people, having the advantage of possessing the needed cash and the understanding of the importance of what was happening, did not miss a chance of getting hold of the sanads. The growth of foreign trade and the ever-expanding demand on Iraqi products, motivated the race for purchasing agrarian lands among the non-cultivating city merchants and administration officials.

This procedure marked the beginning of a new problem of the absentee-landlords who were living mainly in towns and demanding a revenue Melliākiyah for their land which was cultivated by the tribesmen. It goes without saying

1. 'A. Fayyad, Mushkilāt al Arādi fi Lewā'al Muntafiq, (Baghdad, 1956), p.47.

2. A. Jwaideh, op. cit., p.125.

3. S. Fisher, op. cit., Art.8, p.6, the very limited exceptions were mentioned in art.130, p.41.

that the peasants bitterly resented such a deterioration in their status and furiously resisted the new social changes. They bluntly refused to recognise the rights of the absentee-landlords and declined to pay them their claimed mellākiyah.

The change in the social relations of production had generated two different political attitudes. The absentee-landlords and the ṭāpu holders felt that the government was their main ally against a permanent revolution of the peasants. Being incapable of collecting their mellākiyah from the tribesmen, they had to lean and depend on the might of the government to do the job on their behalf. On the other hand the frustrated tribesmen, who rejected becoming mere lessees, found themselves in the opposite trench to the government, who supported their bitter enemies, the absentee landlords and the ṭāpu sanad holders. 'Hence the tapu system first introduced as a protection to the peasant began to be used as method for his oppression'.¹

In certain tribal areas, mainly Muntafiq, the tribal sheikhs took advantage of the ṭāpu system and obtained the sanads. The Sa'dun, influenced by the shrewd advice of their Sheikh Nāṣir Pasha,² himself persuaded by Midhat Pasha,³ purchased large estates. A radical change occurred in the area due to the shift in the social relations of production. The Sa'dun, by becoming land-holders, profoundly altered their position vis-à-vis the tribes; that is from sheikh-tribesman relation to landholder-tenant relation. That marked not only the beginning of the Muntafiq confederation disintegration, but also of a long and bitter struggle between the tribesmen and the Sa'dun. A. Jwaideh deduced:

'And in these conditions it was only by means of their collective strength as members of a tribe that the cultivators were able to protect themselves against government officials and tapu holders alike. In consequence, both cultivators and government came more and more to be dependent on the good offices of the tribal shaikhs as the wielders of the only effective authority which remained: the tribesmen grew more than ever conscious of the tribe as a unity and

1. S. Haider, op. cit., p.532.

2. 'Ali al Sharqi, Dhikkra al Sa'dun, (Baghdad, 1929), pp.45-6.

3. S. Haider, op. cit., pp.566-7. Jwaideh and Haider differ in explaining the motives of Midhat Pasha in granting the lands to the Sa'dun. Jwaideh is very dubious that Midhat was in fact responsible for such an act.

'of their lands as a tribal home or dira, held collectively by the whole tribe'.¹

This deduction represents half the truth. It is very true that the tribe had grown stronger in its unity, but that was only temporary. The downfall of the tribal confederation was a heavy blow to the tribal system as a whole. The tribal sheikh cannot be considered as the only remaining effective authority when, in fact, he was facing the dilemma of either revolting against an increasingly powerful government or losing his popularity among his tribes.

Although the results of Midhat's land reforms were foreign to his intentions, it had at least achieved one of its aims, namely to accelerate the disintegration of tribal society, not by turning the tribesman into the independent and private owner of the land, as was its principle aim, but rather by alienating the tribesman from his land altogether and rendering him a mere tenant. It is true that in the first period the tribesman, resenting the new changes, tended to solidify the tribal organisation, but, in the long run, the land tāpu system sowed the seeds of tribal disintegration.

Anyhow, it seems that in 1880 and 1882 the tāpu system was suspended by two irāda or decrees.² Thus the Turks left a very complicated situation for their British successors, where their methods of tackling it would decide the future events and socio-economic structure of Iraq.

To sum up, Iraqi land conditions as they faced the British were 'Settled agriculture and extended cultivation have tended to disintegrate the tribes and to weaken the influence of the Shaikhs. To restore and continue the power of the tribal chiefs while opening up the country and stimulating agriculture is not the least interesting of the problems in land administration that /Iraq/ represents'.³ This vital and central question will be discussed in due course.

1. A. Jwaideh, op. cit., p.130

2. E. Dowson, op. cit., p.21; M.S. Hassan, op. cit., p.190;
A. Jwaideh, op. cit., in pages 125-6 disputed that such decrees were issued. However the two decrees did not involve the North of Iraq.

3. F.O.371/2406/139231. Admin. Report of the Revenue Board, Baghdad, March 22nd - December 31st 1917, p.5

CHAPTER I I

THE HISTORICAL AND INTELLECTUAL ROOTS OF ARAB NATIONALISM

In 1920 there occurred an Iraqi armed rising which contributed to the subsequent independence of that country, and which was duly encouraged by both nationalists and 'ulemā', facts which are well known and need not be elaborated upon. Also fairly well known is that in 1920 some sort of Islamist-nationalist alliance had taken place and the movement assumed a nationalist-religious inclination in which Arab nationalism was interlinked with jihād, fetwa and other forms of Islamic slogans.

However, such facts raise many unanswered questions. Could such a movement be considered, politically and intellectually, as a nationalist one? In other words, did the Iraqi Arabs possess the hallmarks of a nation so as to produce a nationalist movement? Furthermore, to what extent can nationalism be attributed to a movement which was so religiously inclined? And if so, what are the roots and sources of such an intellectual combination and structure?

This whole work is, of course, dedicated to an attempt to answer those questions. However it is in this chapter that the intellectual aspects of the problem will be emphasized. In the first place I will examine the question concerning the 'existence' of an Iraqi Arab nation. The discussion will then centre on the relation between Islam and Arab nationalism. In contrast to many other opinions, it will be suggested that the two are not identical in spite of the admitted and profound influence of Islam on the national evolution of the Arabs. The conflict between the two was first hinted at by Arab Christians. It then formed an acute intellectual crisis for the Moslem Arab intelligentsia. Some thinkers produced an outlook which combined Islam and nationalism, or to be more precise, tried to reconcile Islam to modern intellectual trends. Politically speaking, it proved to be a superb formula in the sense that it was appealing to the Moslem public and represented a sharp weapon against Western political encroachment. But from an intellectual angle it was a shaky attempt which did not contain the element of endurance. By its very

nature it was a temporary formula, suited only for a transitional period.

Nevertheless, Western occupation was to end the growing conflict between Islam and Arab nationalism, and to introduce into this selective and incompatible combination a fresh and strong validity. The formula proved to be the intellectual cornerstone for the anti-Western resistance, and the meeting point for nationalists and Islamists alike. To such a combination the Iraqi independence movement of 1920 was heavily indebted.

I On the Concept of an Arab Nation: It has been suggested that Arab nationalism was the outcome of the early 20th century conditions and that its rise was generated by two major elements: Western influence and Arab reaction to the turkification of the Ottoman Empire.¹ This concept was challenged from two different points of view.

Some writers denied the Arabs any national character and overlooked the national features which have been possessed by the Arabs.² An Israeli writer claims that 'the state of Iraq was an artificial creation' and that at the end of the Ottoman period 'no such thing as Iraqi nationalism existed'.³ Another Israeli writes 'there is no "Iraqi nation", nor is there a tradition of co-operation to cement the various communities'.⁴ Kedourie/simplified Gibb's notions (or Renan's) and argued:

'The will of those young officers willed an Arab nation, and ethnography, geography or history were of consequence only as they offered sustenance to their imagination'.⁵

In contrast to that, enthusiastic Arab nationalists produced a rosy picture of historical solid Arab unity and harmonious cohesion. They believed in the 'eternal' and unified existence of the Arab nation.⁶ In 1919, King

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1. G. Antonius, The Arab Awakening, (London, 1955), p.13 and after; H. Sharabi, Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World, (Princeton, 1966), pp.7-8; A. Şāigh, Taṭuwur al Mafḥum al Qawmy 'und al 'Arab, (Beirut, 1961).
 2. D. Lloyd George, Memories of the Peace Conference, (New Haven, 1939), Vol.II, pp.659, 666, 669-70; G. Bell, Amurath to Amurath, (London, 1911), p.161
 3. E. Be'eri, Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society, (Jerusalem, 1961), p.326
 4. U. Dann, Iraq Under Qassem, (Jerusalem, 1969), p.1.
 5. E. Kedourie, The Ghatham House Version, (London, 1970), p.214
 6. S. Shawkat, Hādhihi Ihdāfuna, (Baghdad, 1939), p.30; 'A.'A. al Douri, Al Judhur al Tārikhiya lil Qawmiya al 'Arabiya, (Beirut, 1960), pp.7-12

Faisal claimed that 'we were Arabs even before the time of Moses, Muhammad, Jesus and Abraham'.¹ In 1920, he advocated the cause of Arab nationalism at the Peace Conference in Paris. Faisal declared that 'there are few nations in the world as homogenous as the Arabs'.² Nevertheless, in 1933 Faisal wrote that 'Iraq lacks the most important factor of social life: the intellectual, racial and religious unity'.³ After a long elaboration on the elements of disunity in Iraq, Faisal deduced:

'In this regard I say, with great regret that up to now there is no Iraqi people (Sha'b) but social groups empty of any national (Waṭaniya) thought'.⁴

The obvious gap between the two arguments can only be explained by recognizing that both statements contain some elements of truth. It is because these elements were either exaggerated or over-simplified that both statements were in the final analysis neither accurate nor helpful in comprehending a complex historical process.

Some other thinkers tried to draw a distinction in terms of reference.⁵ Hourani gave this endeavour its balanced structure. He distinguished between Arab 'nationalism' as a political movement 'which only became articulated ... during the present century' and Arab 'racial' feeling which the Arabs 'have always been exceptionally conscious of' as far back in history as we can see them'.⁶

Did an Iraqi Arab nation exist in the concrete conditions of Iraq during 1918 to 1921? Nationalism is the emergence of a group of people as a self-conscious entity, demanding the collective expression in institutional and

1. S. al Huṣri, Yaum Maysaloun, (Beirut, n.d.), p.207

2. Faisal's Memo, to the P.C., dated 29.1.1920. Cited by D. Lloyd George, Memories of the Peace Conference, op. cit., p.674

3. Ibid.

4. Faisal's secret Memo., dated Baghdad, March 1933. In 'A. Jawdat, Mudhekerāt, (Beirut, 1967), pp.356-60.

5. H.Z. Nusibeh, Al Qawmiya al 'Arabiya, (Beirut, 1962), pp.39, 61; E. Murqus, Mawdu'āt ala Mu'tamir Ishtirākī 'Arabi, (Damascus, 1963), pp.3-4, 7-9

6. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, (London, 1962), p.260

political form. A nation is recognized by various hallmarks of which language, history, territory, will, and socio-economic unity are the most usual. The process of a nation, as the word 'emergence' denotes, is dynamic and not static. In as far as Iraq is concerned, the writer is inclined to adopt the term nationalitaire rather than nationalism, narod, nationalité or Volkerschaft rather than nation.¹ This is to emphasise the opinion that the Iraqi Arabs had by 1918-1921 outgrown tribalism, but did not acquire the full conditions of nationalism or the hallmarks of a nation in the European sense of the word.²

II. Islam and 'Arab Nationalism': Islam represented a profound element in the process of Arab national development. It unified the Arabs, politically, and took the place of their previous tribal 'Asabiya'. It was under its banners that the process of 'arabization' of the Fertile Crescent, the Nile Valley and North Africa was accelerated. Islam gave the Arabs an ideological justification for expansion, the formation of an Empire and a developed civilization and subsequently a proud sense of history. During the dark ages which engulfed the Arabs, the unified Arabic language of the Quran had, culturally speaking, played an outstanding role in safeguarding Arab national entity. In short Islam enhanced Arab national evolution. Thus Islam as a culture, reinforced by history and language, became an organic and essential part of Arab national structure.

Up to this point, most Arab thinkers, Christians by no means excluded, have been in agreement.³ However, it was from this assumption that there sprang two 'extreme' views. The first claimed that Islam was in fact an Arab national religion. The second argued that Islam was a new unifying force which replaced nationalism and erased all differences between Arabs and non-Arab Moslems. In the final analysis both views shared a common ground. Both failed to draw any

1. The words are Russian, French and German. They were used by different writers to indicate different meanings. I am using them in Maxim Rodinson's method (i) al Mārkisiya wa al Umma, pp.9, 33, and (ii) Hawl al Nadiriya al Mārkisiya, fi al Umma, (Beirut, 1971)

2. See the balanced conclusion of S. Longrigg and R. Stoakes, Iraq, (New York, 1958), pp.21-2.

3. For instance: S. al Ḥuṣri, Irā' wa Muḥāderāt fi al Waṭaniya wa al Qawmiya, (Cairo, 1944), pp.11, 20; Q. Zurāiq, Al Wa'i al Qawmy, (Beirut, 1938), pp.37-8

serious distinction between Islam and Arab nationalism. Both views represent a serious challenge to the assumption adopted in this work, namely that there is a distinction between 'political Islam' and Arab nationalism, and that the Iraqi independence movement was the outcome of an alliance, rather than unity, between nationalists and Islamists.

The most notable exponent of such a trend¹ was al Bazzāz.² He and some other Arab writers did not restrict their efforts to prove the 'Arabism' of Islam by the overall interaction between Arabs and Islam.³ They suggested that Islam, through its major sources of Qurān and al Ḥadīth, had indicated its Arab nationalist character. Such claims were justified by quoting these two sources whenever they used words like qawm or umma or 'arabi. Other most prominent Arab thinkers like Zein⁴ and al Douri⁵ followed Bazzāz in his attempt. If this is true, then no distinction could be drawn between Arab nationalism and Islam. Furthermore, every Arab Moslem, by virtue of his religion, must be considered an Arab nationalist.

A careful reading of the Qurān could reveal that such an argument is both oversimplified and selective in its quotations.⁶ For words qawm or umma are

1. For instance see the works of A.Ḥ. al Bāqouri; M. al Ghazālī; M. al Dawālībī; M.A. al 'Arabi; M. al Kharboutli(1); 'A.R. Fuda, listed in bibliography.
2. 'A.R. al Bazzaz, 'Islam and Arab Nationalism', in S. Haim (ed), Arab Nationalism, (California; 1962).
3. For instance see: S. al Ḥuṣri, Muhāderāt fi Nishu'al Fikra al Qawmiya, (Cairo, 1951), p.194; B. Lewis, The Arabs ..., op. cit., pp.52-3; N. Ziadeh, 'Arabism', in E. Kedourie (ed), Nationalism in Asia and Africa, (London, 1971), p.195, H.Z. Nuseibeh, op. cit., (Arabic), p.50
4. Z.N. Zein, Nishu'..., pp.136-7.
5. al Douri, ... Qawmiya ..., op. cit., pp.12-4.

⁶ Owing to the seriousness of such a claim, I have listed all (?) the Qurānic verses in which words of such nature are mentioned:

Surat	Verse	Surat	Verse
al Baqarah	128-9, 134-5, 143	al Shu'arā'	194
al 'Amrān	104, 110	al Namel	84, 103
al Māi'da	66	al Qaṣaṣ	23
al An'am	38, 42, 66	al Ankabout	18
al A'rāf	34, 38, 159	Fāter	23, 42
	160, 164, 181	al Zumar	28
al Tawbbah	91, 102, 121, 128	Ghāfer	5
Yunis	19, 47, 49	Fuṣilat	2, 41, 44
Hud	8, 48, 118	al Shurra	5, 8
Yusif	2, 12	al Zakhraf	3, 22-23
al Ra'd	30, 37		33, 44

contd.

used in the context of the Islamic Umma in general or to a small group of people (the first pioneers of Islam). In addition to that, the Arab nationalists are evading an important historical and linguistic fact and that is the development which these words had undergone in their meanings. In fact in Surat al an'am of which Bazzāz quoted its 66th verse, one finds that in its 38th verse the word umma is used to refer to human beings and animals alike. The Arab nationalists also ignored other Qurānic verses in which the supra-national outlook of Islam was clearly indicated as in, for instance 'We have sent thee in mercy for mankind'.¹

Furthermore, the concept of Islamic nationalism could be challenged from a historical point of view.² Thus from both an ideological and historical point of view it is difficult to accept the notion that Islam was an Arab national religion or the counter claim that Islam had erased all national differences. However it is true that the Arabs, up to 1830³ did not show many signs of national resentment towards their Ottoman rulers. The writer suggests that such an attitude ought to be understood against the background of certain historical factors.

The Ottoman invasion of the Arab countries did not substitute an Arab rule by an Ottoman one. It merely replaced an 'alien' domination which was already

6 cntd.

Ibrāhīm	4	al Dukhān	58
al Hājer	35	al Jāthiyah	28
al Naḥel	36, 84, 89, 92-93, 105	al Aḥqāf	12, 18
Taha	113	al Fataḥ	11, 16
al Anbiyā'	92	al Hujurāt	14
al Huj	34, 67	al Jum'a	2
al Mu'minnun	43, 44, 52		

1. Surat al Anbiyā' verse 107. Also see Al 'Umrān verse 103, al Anfāl verses 62-62, al A'rāf verse 158, al Furqān verse 1 etc. The Prophet in his farewell speech (al Wadā') said 'there is no difference between an Arab and non-Arab but only in piety'.
2. On al Shu'ubiyah see the works of H.Q. al 'Azīz, 'A.'A. al Dourī (4), 'A.H. al Fakiki, H.A.R. Gibb (4), M.B. Sharīf. Listed in bibliography.
3. I am referring to the Wahhabis and Muhammad 'Alī. On the first see T. al Tawīl, Al Fikar al Dīnnī al Islāmī fi al 'Alem al Arabī, (Cairo, n.d.), p.290; Z.N. Zein, The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, (Beirut, 1966), p.40. On the second see H. Bulwer, The Life of Palmerston, 3rd ed. Vol.II, (London, 1871), pp.145, 267, 269; H. Temperley, England and the Near East: The Crimea, (London, 1934), p.416; E. Ashley, The Life of H.J.T., Viscount Palmerston, 2nd ed., Vol.II, (London, 1876), p.126; 'A.'A.S. Nawār, Tārīkh al 'Irāq al Hadīth, (Cairo, 1968), pp.195-9.

in existence.¹ In the early days of the Ottomans, the Arabs were given a rather dignified treatment.² The Ottoman Islamic Empire was a decentralized one up to the late 18th century when it became centralized.³ It has been argued that Arab 'national' bonds were breaking and giving way to the re-emergence of tribal and family links and domination.⁴ This could be explained by the suggestion that the economy of the area was deteriorating from an economy of commodity to a subsistence economy⁵ and thus encouraged the disintegration of the society into much smaller groups. It has been suggested that the Ottomans conceived themselves as Moslems first and foremost and so was the Empire in its totality (wars, posts, etc.).⁶

The emerging distinction between Islam and Arabism not only became apparent during the years which preceded the First World War, but it also formed and represented an acute 'intellectual and conscious crisis' to Arab thinkers. Islam was, for centuries, the cornerstone of the Arab culture and rarely a conflict was envisaged between pride in arabism and faith in Islam. However, the comfortable dichotomy could not remain for long.

The ideological conflict between Islam and Arab nationalism was evident but only in its embryonic form during the period which immediately preceded the British occupation. Arab 'nationalist' writers of that time (Christians excluded), demanded Arab rights by pleading that Arabs were better guardians of Islam than Turks. Thus it is highly probable that thinkers and politicians of that period might very well have visualized themselves as both Moslems and

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1. Nāji 'Aloush, Tetawrāt al Ḥaraka al 'Arabiya mundh 'Asr al Nahda', Dirāsāt 'Arabiya, No.1, November 1965, Beirut, p.57
 2. Gibb and Bowen, op. cit., Vol.1, part 1, p.160
 3. Dr. Muḥammad Anīs, Al Dawla al 'Uthmaniya wa al Sharq al 'Arabi 1514-1914, (Cairo, n.d.), pp.117-28
 4. Philip Hitti, Lebanon in History, trd. in Arabic by Dr. Anīs Furīḥah, (Beirut, 1956), p.344; Also, Sydney Fisher, The Middle East: A History, (New York, 1959), p.254.
 5. E. Murqus, Naqd al Fiker al Qawmi, (Beirut, 1966), p.452
 6. 'A. Gharāiybah, Mugedama li Tārīkh al 'Arab al Ḥadīth, (Damascus, 1960), Vol.1, pp.88-9. Also Gibb & Bowen, op. cit., Vol.1, Part 1, p.159

Arab nationalists. The British occupation had enhanced such a notion and obliterated the previously rising conflict between Islamists and nationalists.

III The Political and Intellectual Revival: The decay of the Ottoman Empire produced three disparate phenomena in Arab life: encouragement and escalation of European penetration; attempts at internal regeneration; and, increase of organized rebellions. On the other hand, the Turkish attempt at the reconstruction of the Empire was not only ill-timed but was also accompanied by measures at centralization and conspicuously characterized by a Turkish nationalist tendency. This was to provide a further raison d'être to provoke Arab nationalist consciousness.

Western incursion had the effect of exposing to the Arabs that the Ottomans had failed in the task of defending the Moslem homeland against foreign invaders.¹ The new rulers were, religiously and culturally, different from the Arabs. The imperialist character of the new invaders was only one side of the coin. The other side was represented by their culture and advanced civilization. To an elite of Arabs 'the imperialist West was also the educative West, and, in large measure the frame of reference'.²

However, Arab conceptual tools were by that time so deficient that they were unable to defy the new culture or to assimilate it. This challenge stimulated, among an elite of Arabs, a comprehensive re-examination of their intellectual heritage in an attempt at regenerating their entire mental outlook.

Such a problem of cultural communication³ was furthermore complicated by the powerful and prodigious presence of Islam. Islam was by no means a passing belief. The Moslem intelligentsia and masses alike held a profound attachment to Islam. In it, they visualized their threatened entity, and found their cultural and historical roots. For them Islam was the last remaining source

1. T. Barru, Al Qawmiya al 'Arabiya, (Damascus, 1965), pp.10-12

2. J. Berque, 'The Arabs and Social Science in the last Hundred Years', Middle East Forum, Vol.XLIII, No.1, 1967, p.153

3. Hisham Sharibi, 'Political and Intellectual Attitudes of the Young Arab Generation', The Arab Middle East and Muslim Africa, ed. Tiber Kerekes, (Washington, 1961), p.60

of pride and consolation in their desperate confrontation with the ever advancing West. In a way Islam provided the Arab with a much needed 'spirit in the spiritless world'. Such an objective and perhaps even a romantic and tragic attachment to Islam did not, one assumes, possess the minds or hearts of the Christian Arab intellectual elite.

All these factors interacted not only to give birth to an Arab renaissance intellectual movement, but also to cause its split into two distinct sections; that is of 'modernization' and 'westernization'. The westernization school not only admired Europe, but it also proceeded from the European heritage and was inspired by it. The modernization school made Islam its starting point and its interest in European culture was selective and modified.

The relations between the representatives of the two trends were of an interesting character. Although in disagreement over several issues, their links, friendship and understanding, were of a profound nature. Both found themselves as a minority of intellectual elite looking for new values within a society which was hostile to any attempted innovations. Shibli Shumail wrote to Rashid Ridā (both were leaders in the Ottoman decentralization Party) summing up their points of agreement and dispute:

'You conceive Muhammad as the prophet and glorify him. I see him as a man and glorify him more. You and I, although in regard of belief (religion and religious principle) are in complete contrast. Yet, the bond between us is the tolerant and open mind and the sincerity of our ideas ...'.¹

In the realm of abstract thinking, Shumail might have been right in his optimism, but in the field of active politics the consequences of such conflict was of a more far reaching implication than what Shumail might have envisaged.

(1) The Failure of the Westernization Trend in Iraq: It is evident that Arab Christians were the early pioneers of Arab nationalism.² However, the influence of their ideas and concepts was negligible in Iraq except in the case of Zahāwī

1. al Manār, Vol.XI, (Cairo, 3 March 1908), p.10

2. S. al Khāzin, Yusif Beg Karam fi al Manfa, (Beirut, 1950), pp.346-62; 'A.K. Gharāiybah, Suriya fi al Qern al Tāsa' Asher, (Cairo, 1962), pp. 215-21; F. Şarouf and N.A. Fāris (eds), Al Fiker al 'Arabi fi Mā'et Sanna, (A.U.B., 1967), pp.59-60, 87, 476-7.

and al Karmali.¹ Several reasons were behind this lack of impact. Religious factors, cultural links with the West, the massacres of 1845-1960 and hostility towards the Ottomans, had contributed to the form and essence of the Christian intellectual endeavours. Toynbee, who pointed out that 'The Arabic speaking Christian minority's reception of Western civilization was spontaneous', explained that in terms of religious and commercial links.² Hourani's evaluation introduces a similar explanation, and while emphasising the importance of 'foreign protection', Hourani mentions that trade was passing 'into the hands of oriental Christians and Jews' who became 'middlemen in the trade with Europe'.³

This combination of factors made the Christian intellectual outlook of a more daring nature in defying the traditional beliefs, and in responding to the new trends of the west, especially in regard to nationalism as a substitute for religion, in adopting a secularist outlook and in taking a sympathetic attitude towards the west. On the other hand, it was precisely these factors and their intellectual product which, not being shared by the Moslem majority, deprived the Christian movement of the popular response at which it was aiming.⁴

More often than not the Arab Christians gave the impression of failing to show a deep resentment towards western incursion⁵ or a genuine interest in preserving Moslem unity.⁶ Such an attitude might have been pardonable, but it definitely was not appealing to the Arab Moslems who, in fact, resented the Western intrusion more than the Ottoman domination. Ruṣāfi, who himself was a secular Iraqi Arab nationalist,⁷ told Jādirji that he was antagonized by the

1. Infra, pp. 48, footnote 3; 52-3

2. A. Toynbee, 'Aspects of Arab History', The Listener, 5 September 1968, Vol.80, No.2058, p.294

3. A. Hourani, op. cit., pp.40, 57, 95

4. A. Toynbee, 'Aspects ...', op. cit., p.294

5. A. Hourani, op. cit., pp.252, 278-9

6. Not to ignore that Farah Antun (1874-1922) had asserted that his loyalty and that of his fellow Christians had been always addressed to the East, Ibn Rushid wa Falsafatuhu, (Cairo, 1903), pp.169, 179, 205.

7. Infra, pp. 52, 56

ideas of Beirut's Christians and provoked to write his poem¹ (Mā Hadedha ...).² Tawfiq al Suwaīdi (an Iraq Arab nationalist who attended the 'Paris Conference') criticized the Arab Christians' attitude of anti-Ottoman separationism.³

Sharabi suggested a demographic reason behind the failure of Iraqi Christians to perform an intellectual role similar to that of their Syrian counterparts:

'In areas where Christians constituted small minorities amid a Muslim majority they tended to withdraw from participation in public and political life ... The Christian minorities in Iraq ... owing to their structural diversity, small size, and social isolation, tended to lead a closed-in and parochial existence with little contact with their Muslim environment'.⁴

Thus it is not surprising that the secular form of nationalism did not influence the Iraqis at that time. However there was another form of intellectual revival and 'Arab nationalism' which proved more suitable to the Iraqi intelligentsia of that period.

(ii) The Islamic Reformers' Impact: In the first place, it is evident that those thinkers⁵ exercised a strong impact on the emerging Iraqi intelligentsia.⁶ Not only because their ideas and works were widely circulated in Iraq, but also because their preaching was to divide the Iraqi intellectuals into adherents and opponents. Men of letters such as al Zahāwī (1863-1936), al Shahrīstānī, al Ruṣāfī (1875-1945), al Kādīmī (1876-1935), al Ḥabubī (d.1915) and al Shabībī (1887-1966) were to accept and advocate some of the ideas emanating from Egypt and Paris (al 'Urwa al Wuthqa). Thus they have created a new school of thinking

1. Kāmil al Jādirjī Papers.

2. M. al Ruṣāfī, Diwān al Ruṣāfī, 3rd ed. (Cairo, 1947), pp.394-7

عدّوا النصارى وعدّوا المسلمين بيا
دعّم نصرتهم طهرهم أعماريا
كانوا أمق البرابيات فعدّوا
من أبطل الناس في الدنيا مطالبيا

3. T. al Suwaīdi, Mudhekkerāt, (Beirut, 1969), pp.26-31

4. H. Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years 1875-1914, (London, 1970), pp.113-5

5. Afghānī (1838-1897), 'Abduh (1849-1905), Ridā (1865-1935), al Kawākibī (1849-1902)

6. For instance see: A.A. Sa'd, al Shi'r wa al Shu'rā' fi al 'Irāq, (Beirut, 1956), pp.7, 97-8; M.D. Ismā'īl, Milāmeḥ al 'Aṣr, (Sīda, 1967), pp. 13-14

which was to be challenged by other writers and even persecuted by the conservative religious establishment. This whole process was to lead to an open controversy.¹

The ideas of the reformers could be classified into two sections: political and philosophical. From a political point of view, the reformers were aiming to arouse religious feelings as an effective way to combat Western imperialism.² They did not hesitate in condemning sectarianism and called for the burial of the 'minor, insignificant, and outdated' differences between Shi'i and Sunni sects. They went as far as advocating unity between Moslems, Christians and Jews.³ After years of sectarian and communal division of Arab societies, the early pioneers attempted a re-division of the society on bases of intellectual trends, political inclinations and nationalism rather than any of the past values.

In spite of their declared appreciation of Western culture, the reformers uttered a passionate protest against Western imperialism and its growing penetration.⁴ Apart from the national aspect of such an attitude, it was to stimulate an anti-Western Arab national movement which had greatly influenced the Iraqis. The impact of the reformers explains an aspect of the anti-Western tendency of the Iraqi movement. It also casts a light on the comparative ease with which the Iraqi nationalists and 'progressive' Islamists were able to join efforts.

Moreover the reformers were ardent advocates of constitutionalism. They wanted to see a constitutional, strong and just ruler, 'and if he betrayed

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1. For instance see: Dr. 'A. Wardi, R. Baṭi (1, 2 and 3), M.N. al Wā'id, 'A. M. al Qaṣāb, H. 'A. Kamāl al Dīn, listed in bibliography.
 2. N.R. Keddie, An Islamic Response to Imperialism ..., (Berkeley, 1968), p.97; D.M. Wallace, Egypt and the Egyptian Question, (London, 1883), p.103.
 3. M. al Makhzumi, Khāṭirāt Jamāl al Dīn, (Beirut, 1931), p.82; M.R. Ridā, Tārīkh ... Muḥammad 'Abduh, (Cairo, 1947), Vol.1, p.819; A.M. Ḥamādeh, M. 'Abduh, (Cairo, n.d.), pp.124-40; 'A. al Nadīm, Sulāfāt al Nadīm, (Cairo, 1897), Vol.2, p.78; 'A.R. al Kawākibi, Tabā'i' al Istibdād, (Cairo, n.d.), pp.107-8.
 4. N.R. Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran; The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892, (London, 1966), pp.15-27; Al 'Urwa al Withqa, (Beirut, 1910), Vol.1, p.13, Vol.2, pp.14, 68, 138, 200-3.

the constitution ... it is either his head should remain without a crown or his crown without a head'.¹ They explained European progress to 'the absence of individualistic rule'² and argued that when science and knowledge enlighten a nation 'it will first have to rid itself from absolute rule'.³

Moreover, Islamic reformers, with varied degrees of emphasis, were without exception glorifying the Arab role and potential in preserving Islam, discrediting the Turks and expressing dismay at Turkish treatment of the Arabs.⁴ It was but logical that such an approach was to 'pave the way' for the rise of an Arab national awareness.⁵

From a philosophical point of view, the modernists' opinions of Islam and the contemporary world were of far reaching implications. It is significant that none of them escaped the formidable accusation of being religiously sceptical and even atheists.⁶ In Iraq, with its tradition of violence, accusation of that sort meant a threat to the modernists' lives. On the 13th October 1908, Thuniyān, Ruṣāfi and Zahāwi escaped death at the hands of a furious mob because they were defending the constitution.⁷ In 1910, Zahāwi fled Baghdad for several months so that 'people' might forget an article by him advocating women's rights.⁸ Such accusations would cast serious doubts on the reformers' ability to influence other Moslems, including some 'Ulemā' who would not have been 'deceived' by 'infidels'.

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1. J.D. al Afghāni, Al 'Amāl al Kāmila, (ed.) by M. 'Amarah, (Cairo, 1963), pp.477-9
 2. Ibid., pp.428-9
 3. Ibid.; Al Hukuma al Istibdādiya, al Manār, Vol.3, 1900
 4. Makhzumi, op. cit., pp.104-5, 153; M. 'Abduh, al Islām wa al Radd 'ala Muntagidieh, (Cairo, 1947), p.26; 'A.R. al Kawākibi, Umm al Qurra, (Aleppo, 1959), pp.169-71, 218-22, 227-34, 238-43.
 5. Afghāni, Al Waḥda al Islāmiya, (Cairo, 1933), p.10; M.R. Ridā, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., Vol.1, p.307; S. al Ḥuṣri, Mā Hiya al Qawmiya, (Beirut, 1959), pp.225-6
 6. N.R. Keddie, Islamic ..., op. cit., p.92; S. Haim, op. cit., p.11; E. Kedourie, Afghani and Abduh, (London, 1966); E. Kedourie, 'Further light on Afghani', Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.1, No.2, January 1965, pp.187-202; M.A. Khalaf Allah, 'Abd Allah al Nadīm wa Mudhekkerātuḥu al Siyāsiya, (Cairo, 1956), p.52
 7. 'A.D. al A'dami, Mukhtaṣir Tārīkh Baghdād, (Baghdad, 1926), pp.249-50
 8. A.H. al Rishudi, Al Zahāwi, (Beirut, 1966), pp.113-4

'Islam' had, in the late Ottoman period, degenerated into a non-thinking, anti-rational, sectarian and submissive doctrine which justified the denominationalistic and despotic character of the Ottoman power. The reformers appeared in a society whose mental outlook was dominated by certain 'conservative' aspects of Islam.¹ They advocated a constitutional rule among people who believed in the 'acknowledgment of the existing power, ... whatever it be'.² They were calling for knowledge in a society whose religious establishment used to warn that 'Satan to impress you, rehearses the excellence of knowledge'.³ They were advocating political activities in a society which was under the assumption that 'not merely political decisions but all outward forms of social life were beyond the ability of man to control'.⁴ They preached social justice and political struggle in a community which was systematically indoctrinated that Islam called to 'live in poverty', to 'ignore life',⁵ and that he was doomed to hell-fire any learned person whose 'sole purpose in pursuing knowledge is to enjoy the luxuries of this life and to achieve power and position among its people'.⁶

Thus it is not an exaggeration to suggest that the Islamic reformers were advocating nothing less than an intellectual revolution. They who maintained 'taqdīm al 'aql 'ala qāhir al shara' (the priority of reason over the apparent shara') and 'al naḍer al 'Aqli li taḥṣīl al imān', (the rational examination to acquire faith);⁷ were in fact negating all that the official Ottoman Islam stood for. Nevertheless, Islamic reformers were well within accepted tradition which existed in Islam and in the Shi'i sect in particular.

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1. M.W. Watt, Muslim Intellectuals: A Study of al Ghazali, (Edinburgh, 1963), p.vii
 2. M. Halpern, The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa, (Princeton, 1965), p.17
 3. M.W. Watt, The Faith and Practice of Al Ghazali, (London, 1958), p.87
 4. M.W. Watt, Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al Ghazali, (Edinburgh, 1963), p.179. Also I. Mehdewi, Abu Ḥamid al Ghazālī, Dirrāsa Jadīda fi Hiyātihi wa Irā'ihī, al Adāb No. 10 & 11, October and November 1968 (originally an outline for a Ph.D. thesis).
 5. Dr. Z. Mubārīk, al Ghazālī wa al Ikhlāq, (Cairo, n.d.), pp.81, 83
 6. Abu Hamid al Ghazali, Book of Knowledge, (Eng. trans. by Dr. N.A. Faris), (Lahore, 1962), p.162
 7. Muḥammad 'Abduh, al Islām Dīn al 'Alm wa al Madaniya, (Cairo, n.d.), pp.95-6

It is true that Afghāni admitted that 'So long as humanity exists, the struggle will not cease between dogma and free investigation, between religion and philosophy'.¹ However, it is equally true that Afghāni and 'Abduh saw in 'genuine Islam' a solution of this conflict.² In other words, and as Hourani brilliantly put it:

'He [Afghani] accepted the final identification of philosophy and prophecy, that what the prophet received through inspiration was the same as what the philosopher could attain by the use of knowledge'.³

Hourani's argument shows how heavily were the new reformers dependent on earlier trends which had existed in Islam.⁴ In fact it has been pointed out that Afghāni was highly influenced by ibn Rushd⁵ (Averroes) who attempted a reconciliation between philosophy and religion. Furthermore, what Hourani is attributing to Afghāni is very similar to statements uttered by the Mu'tazilite who argued that 'the truthfulness of the prophecy is to be judged by the rational thinking, without which there would be no use of the Qurān or the Sunnah'⁶ or their claim that the Prophet had 'reasoned the rational 'aqliyāt aspects of Islām; otherwise he would not have been able to assimilate the revelation'.⁷

Thus one could argue that the reformers were, on the one hand, serious thinkers who challenged the prevailing notions of Islam. On the other hand, those reformers were well within the general framework of Islam and its tolerance. In other words, they rejected both unthinking traditionalism and blind imitation of the West. They revived certain Islamic values vitally needed for life in

1. N.D. Keddie, op. cit., p.187

2. Ibid., pp.107, 130-74; M. 'Abduh, Al Islām wa al Naṣrāniya, (Cairo, 1947), pp.107, 130-40.

3. A. Hourani, op. cit., p.123

4. On Avicenna influence on Afghani see: A. Hourani, op. cit., p.108; on Avicenna and Averroes influence see: N. Keddie, op. cit., pp.9, 38, 46-7, 50-2, 62, 92.

5. Dr. 'A. Wardi, Limahāt Ijtimā'iyā min Tārīkh al 'Irāq al Ḥadīth, Vol.3, (Baghdad, 1972), p.316

6. Dr. M. Fakhri, Dirasāt fī al Fikr al 'Arabi, (Beirut, 1970), p.77; Also I. al Mēhdewi, op. cit., Part 2, p.54

7. Ibid

the modern world, such as activism, the freer use of human reason, and political and military strength. By seeking these values within the Islamic tradition instead of openly borrowing from the West, the reformers were able to: (i) attain an influence of believing Moslems which was not shared by those who simply appropriated Western ideas,¹ (ii) make the much needed new Western values more acceptable,² and (iii) bridge the gap between Shi'i and Sunni Moslems.

Nevertheless, by virtue of their own approach, the reformers had established a difficult predicament. Their notion of Islam was subjected to a subjective and selective attitude of emphasizing the rational aspects of 'old Islam' and, thus, had left much to be clarified. From a political point of view, they created a difficult dilemma. They glorified the Arabs and exposed the despotic and stagnant Ottoman rule. Yet they called for the preservation of the Empire.³ Such a dilemma was to torture the intelligentsia who accepted (or shared) their logic. The Iraqi intellectuals could by no means escape such a quandary.

This political dichotomy explains two things: when the decisive moment came in 1914, the Arab intellectuals were not prepared to draw a common line of political action. Instead they fell into political splits and intellectual confusion. However, when the British occupation had obliterated the conflict between Islam and Arabism, it was easy for the Iraqi nationalists and Islamists to close their ranks in confronting the new challenge.

Rashīd Ridā who influenced the Iraqis through his al Manār and Decentralization party⁴ and who, during his visit to Baghdad (1912), was considered as the pioneer of Arab nationalism,⁵ was a clear manifestation of such a predicament. In 1897, he explicitly argued that 'our future depends on rejecting Europe's principle of nationality'.⁶ In 1900 he warned against fragmentation

1. N.R. Keddie, op. cit., p.3.

2. M. Khadduri, Political Trends...., op. cit., pp.64-5

3. M.R. Ridā, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., Vol.1, p.912

4. Infra, pp.76

5. Kh. M. Ismā'īl, Qalam Wazīer, (Baghdad, 1970), pp.44-5

6. A. Manār, Vol.1, 1897, p.67

of the Moslems into races and nations.¹ In 1904 Riḍā denied that the Caliphate should be an Arab and argued 'We want unity with the Turks but on the basis of justice and equality'.² However, in 1900 and in an article entitled 'Arabs and Turks', he openly came in favour of the Arab character, culture, methods of rule and even military conquest.³ Riḍā bitterly criticized Turkish treatment of the Arabs.⁴ Nevertheless, he condemned the Arab nationalists in Egypt and the Turkish nationalists alike; both were endangering Islamic unity.⁵

Riḍā explained that his aim was the modernization of the Moslems and not the establishment of a unified Islamic state 'which was impossible to be realized'.⁶ For him, it was essential to strengthen the 'Arabs' by modern science and the achievement of 'some sort of Arab unity to withstand Western attack'.⁷

On the subjective level, Riḍā kept being faithful to his beliefs and attempt to reconcile the incompatibles. However, by virtue of his approach and calls for religious reforms, modernization and Arabism, Riḍā was, objectively, undermining the Empire. Subsequent historical development was to demolish the wishful destinies which Riḍā had striven for. The Ottoman Empire was getting more Turkish and less Islamic, more impotent and less powerful. Thus, the writings of Riḍā were, accordingly, assuming more aggressiveness towards the Turks and carrying a stronger Arab nationalist accent. As early as 1908, Riḍā expressed his fears concerning the Turkish nationalist tendencies of the 'Young Turk'.⁸ By 1913 most of al Manār pages were devoted to a bitter attack against the 'Unionists' and their racial and antagonistic policies towards the Arabs.⁹

1. Ibid., Vol.3, 1900, p.124

2. Ibid., Vol.6, 1904, p.955

3. Ibid., Vol.3, 1900, pp.169-72

4. Ibid., p.193

5. Ibid., pp.193-8

6. Ibid., p.339

7. Ibid., pp.121-4

8. Al Manār, Vol.II, 1908, pp.10, 836-841, 842-859

9. Ibid., Vol.16, 1913, pp.6, 55-62, 107, 130, 136, 140, 145, 231, 471, 550.

Riḍā's dilemma reached its climax with the outbreak of World War I. On the one hand, and as a leading member of the Decentralization Party, he was engaged in an anti-Ottoman attempt and accepting aid from the British in the hope of achieving an independent Arab government.¹ On the other hand, and once it became clear that it was the Arabs rather than the British who were the pawns of the game, Riḍā advised Sharif Hussein to terminate his alliance with the British and to strive for Arab unity rather than indulging in anti-Ottoman activities. He warned Hussein and other Arab leaders against British plans and designs.²

(iii) The Political Rift Among Arab Nationalists: The embryonic growth of the ideas of nationalism among Arabs took place during the late period of the last century and the early part of this century. It is of historical significance to observe that at that time the Turkish domination (which once engulfed all Arab countries)³ was relinquished from Egypt, Sudan and North Africa and was replaced by the control of European Powers. Turkish authority over the Levant and Iraq continued to a later period until it was finally liquidated during the War. This historical fact gave birth to an important rift among Arab nationalist movement(s). In the Levant it was Turkish oppression that accompanied the steady growth of the ideas of nationalism among Syrian (greater Syria) intellectuals. Thus it is hardly surprising that the nationalism of Syria was to be stamped by the following forms: (a) profound pan-Arab sentiment and outlook; (b) faint Islamic colour; (c) strong Christian Arab influence; (d) a guarded attitude of optimism toward the Western Powers. An attitude which ranged from mild resentment to open political flirtation.

It is hardly surprising that the national movement of Egypt whose growth was crystalizing under conditions of British rather than Turkish occupation, was to be shaped in a form of an anti-British, pro-Ottoman and a cautious

1. Sh. Arsalān, Saiyid Rashīd Riḍā ..., (Damascus, 1937), pp.152-6

2. Ibid., pp.314-7.

3. Only Morocco remained out of this domination.

apprehension toward 'Arab nationalism'.¹ Such was the attitude of several generations of Egyptian nationalist leaders who successively directed the trend of the national movement;² Ahmed 'Urābi³ (the leader of the 1881 uprising), Muṣṭafa Kāmil⁴ (1874-1908), Muḥammad Farīd⁵ (d.1919) and a large number of Egypt's public opinion leaders.⁶ Thus it was natural that when the revolt of Hijaz was declared in 1916, Egypt's nationalists assumed a hostile attitude towards this venture.⁷ They expressed a consistent desire in upholding the Caliphate institution, and saw 'the Arab Revolution' as an English 'conspiracy',⁸ and subsequently resented the idea of 'Arab nationalism'.⁹

One could fairly conclude that Arab resentment of the West in general was deeply rooted. To suggest that Arab animosity towards Britain was but a product of the post-1918 period, as it is commonly believed in the Eastern (Mashraq) part of Arab countries,¹⁰ is simply a one-sided and consequently an erroneous outlook which excludes the Iraqi and African Arabs¹¹ from being

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1. 'Arab nationalism' is used here in the sense of Arab separation from the Ottoman Empire.
 2. Jamāl 'Abd al Nāṣer, al Mithāq al Waṭani, (Cairo, 1964), pp.21-22
 3. Ahmed 'Urābi dismissed his 'Arab' tendencies and wrote 'An Arab state ... is a betrayal of Islam and a violation of the teachings of Allah and his Messenger'. Sāṭi' al Ḥuṣri, Mā Hiy al Qawmiya, op. cit., p.203
 4. He said 'although the Egyptians know only one homeland, and that is Egypt, it is surely natural that they should support the Caliphate state ...'. 'Abd al Rahman al Rafa'i, Muṣṭafa Kāmil; Bāi'th al Ḥaraka al Waṭaniya, (Cairo, 1939), p.93. Extract from a speech in Alexandria, 1900.
 5. See his book: Tārīkh al Dawla al 'Alia al 'Othmaniya, (Cairo, 1894). In his memoirs he wrote 'there would be no salvation for Egypt from British occupation but only through Ottoman sovereignty'. 'Mudhekerāt Muḥammad Farīd', published in al Kātib No.104, Year 9, (Cairo, 1969). Extract from his memoirs on 10th April 1892, 22nd February 1894 and May 1897.
 6. A. Ṣāigh, al Fikra al 'Arabiya fi Miṣir, (Beirut, 1959), Chapters 3 and 4.
 7. Dr. Muḥammad Ḥusseīn, al Itijāhāt al Waṭaniya fi al Adb al Mu'āṣir, Vol.II (Cairo, 1956), pp.1-20, 39.
 8. Sāṭi' al Ḥuṣri, Arā' wa Aḥadīth fi al Qawmiya al 'Arabiya, (Beirut, 1956), pp.18, 143
 9. Sāṭi' al Ḥuṣri, Muḥaḍerāt fi Neshu' al Fikra al Qawmiya, (Cairo, 1951), pp.224-5
 10. Dr. H. Nuseibeh, op. cit., pp.88-9
 11. 'Alāl al Fāsi, Al Ḥarakāt al Istiqlāliya fi al Mighreb al 'Arabi, (Cairo, 1948)

part of Arab history. It is a narrow notion which reduces Arab history to the history of the Hashimites and the 1916 uprising.

In consequence, the Iraqi nationalist movement was faced, since its early days, with two dissimilar influences. One emanating from Cairo, warning against Britain's designs and its Arab allies; the other from Syria (and Hijaz) demanding an end to Turkish domination, even at the price of accepting Britain's Alignment. The Syrian outlook was further enhanced because of British Liberal policy in Syria.

The Iraqi nationalist movement differed from the Egyptian and Syrian in several points, two of which are of direct relevance to the argument. First: it emerged in a relatively later period (1909-1920) from that of the Levant or Egypt. In consequence the crystallization of this rather latecomer was to undergo the dual suppression of both Turkish and British administrations successively. This fact was to characterize the Iraqi nationalist movement by two rather contradictory features. On the one hand, Iraq's nationalists spared no means to demonstrate their resentment of British occupation, on the other hand, the Iraqi nationalists accepted and desired the leadership of the Hashimites.

The Intellectual Atmosphere in Iraq: The rising Iraqi intelligentsia was deeply influenced by the ideas emanating from Egypt and the Levant. However, the Iraqi intellectual contribution to the dialogue was very limited. The conditions surrounding Iraq had deprived it of the necessary premises of a profound intellectual revival.

Iraq did not enjoy political and intellectual liberties as those of Egypt. Suppression was evident and the free exchange of ideas was rarely permissible.¹ Modern high education in Iraq lagged far behind that of Egypt and Syria. Between 1872 and 1912 the total number of Iraqi students in Istanbul was 1,400 of whom no less than 1,200 were graduates as officers who served in the Ottoman

1. M. Fahmi, Al Zahāwī, (Cairo, n.d.), pp.10-4; A. Fayyad, Al Thawra al 'Irāqiya al Kubra, (Baghdad, 1963), pp.40-51.

Army.¹ During the same period of time the number of Iraqi students in the American University of Beirut did not exceed 70.² Apart from a few Christians, prominent among them at Karmali,³ the bulk of them were not inclined to exercise an intellectual role similar to their Syrian counterparts. Nevertheless, if the Iraqis were not able to perform a fundamental contribution, they were influenced by the rising trends and their writings were to show that impact.

The Iraqi Arab Shi'ah were the first to accept and advocate the ideas of modernization and nationalism. Being Arabs they resented their identification with Persia or with their Ottoman oppressors. Being, on the other hand, Shi'ah they resented the sectarian and despotic rule of the Ottomans but could not denounce Islam or accept westernization. It was logical for them to strive for a constitutional era and an Arab national entity. Their response to the reformist and nationalist ideas was spontaneous. Kedourie pointed out that:

'They [Arab nationalists] no doubt represented themselves as enlightened liberals free from religious fanaticism, anxious for the welfare of Islam as a whole and for the freedom of all Muslims from Christian domination. This line of argument would appeal to the Shi'a divines touched as they were by the teachings of the influential Jamal al Din al Afghani, himself a Shi'a, who had preached a Sunni-Shi'a reunion for the sake of the political regeneration of Islam'.⁴

The closeness of the reformists' ideas to that of the intellectual tradition of the Shi'ah was also indicated by Hourani and Keddie.⁵ I have tried to show the similarities between the Mu'tazilites and the modernists' vision of Islam.⁶ In this respect it is relevant to remember the 'known fact

1. A.W. al Qaysi, The Impact of Modernization on Iraqi Society During the Ottoman Era: A Study of Intellectual Development in Iraq 1869-1917. Unpublished Ph.d. Thesis (University of Michigan, 1958), p.67

2. Ibid., p.87

3. Instās Māry al Karmali (1866-1947). Educated in Beirut and France, wrote several articles in Egyptian periodicals, published Lughat al 'Arab (1911-1914), in which he glorified the Arab language and history, was arrested in 1914. Shabībī considered him as one of the early pioneers of Arab nationalism. In 1918 and after he edited al 'Arab advocating Arab nationalism and cooperation with the British; K. 'Awād, I.M. al Karmali, (Baghdad, 1960); J. Jabouri, Al Karmali al Khālid, (Baghdad, 1947).

4. E. Kedourie, England and the Middle East, (London, 1956), p.190. Kedourie seems to imply that the nationalists were other than Shi'ah. In fact all nationalists who were in contact with the 'divines' were themselves Shi'ah.

5. A. Hourani, op. cit., p.108; N.R. Keddie, op. cit., pp.9, 39, 46-7, 50-1, 62, 92.

6. Supra, p.42

that the Shi'ah inherited the Ma'tazilites in the sense of dependence on reason and logic'.¹ The new vision of Islam, as advocated by the modernists, was appealing to the Iraqi Shi'ah. It was largely drawn from their own traditions and met their practical needs of a society based on equality and arabism.

Al Baṣīr considers the Iraqi poetical movement, which took place during the late 19th Century and the early years of the 20th, to be a revival of the rational traditions which flourished during al Ma'mun era.² Baṣīr hails that tradition as the most glorious in Arab intellectual history and claims that those who revived it in Iraq were all of 'purely Arab origins'.³ He considers Ibrāhīm al Ṭbaṭbā'i (d.1905) as the first Iraqi poet who advocated 'Arab nationalism'.⁴ In fact such 'credit' goes to al Jamīl⁵ and al Akhrass (Shi'i).

Nevertheless, it is evident that the Iraqi Shi'ah were the pioneers of Arab national resentment of Turkish domination.⁶ The influence of the Shi'i faith in resenting the Turks and demanding an Arab rule was clearly shown by two poets. Ḥayder al Hilli (d.1887) compared the Turkish rule to the one that had slaughtered al Ḥussein.⁷ He also compared the Hashimites of Mecca with the rise of the promised Mahdi.⁸ Ṭbaṭbā'i begged the Mahdi to rise and

1. A.F. Al Nafeesi, The Role of the Shi'ah in the Political Development of Modern Iraq 1914-1921, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge University, 1972), p.109
2. M.M. al Baṣīr, Nahdat al 'Irāq al Adabiya, (Baghdad, 1947), pp.8-9, 15-6, 330. Baṣīr himself is an Arab nationalist and a Shi'i intellectual who played a remarkable political role during 1919-1922.
3. Ibid., p.10
4. Ibid., pp.141-61. The poem was written in 1899; see his Diwān, (Ṣaīda, n.d.), pp.97-102.
5. 'Abd al Ghani al Jamīl (1780-1963), a Sunni 'alim, popular leader and a poet.ⁱ In 1832, he led an uprising in Baghdad.ⁱⁱ It was suggested that his movement was encouraged by Ibrāhīm Pasha in Syria.ⁱⁱⁱ It seems that he was the first Iraqi to consider the Turks as foreigners and to call for an Arab rising.^{iv}
 - i) M. al Allusi, Gharā'ib al Aghtirāb, (Baghdad, 1327-1910), p.211 and after.
 - ii) 'A. al 'Azzāwi, Tārīkh al 'Irāq ..., op. cit., Vol.7, pp.14-6
 - iii) 'A.'A. Nawār, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., pp.196-8
 - iv) Majmu'at 'A. Gh. al Akhrass, (Baghdad, n.d.), pp.23-9, 45-55, 123-4
6. I concluded that from two major works:: Y. Izzedien, Al Shi'r al 'Irāqi fi al Qern al Tās'i 'Asher, (Baghdad, 1959); I. al Wā'ilī, Al Shi'r al Siyāsī al 'Irāqi fi al Qern al Tas'i 'Asher, (Baghdad, 1961).
7. S.H. al Hilli, Al Durr al Yatīm, (Bombay, n.d.), pp.366, 394
8. Ibid., pp.183-6

اما القعود من آفة ... يا لها نديتك من شائفة
 ادلك منو المردن ما ... وخالصة السب الفاخر
 دنيه بسوينة خطه ... يا ليس يرضى سود الكافر

predicted that he will emerge from Mecca.¹

'Abd al Ghafār al Akhrass was a close friend of al Jamīl and influenced by his movement. He wrote several poems which left no doubt as to his Arab national inclinations.² Ṣāliḥ al Qazwīni (d.1883) accused the Turks of treacherous oppression,³ and his son Rādī (d.1870) complained of his alienation in Persia and explicitly preferred the 'Iraqi Arabs' over the Turks.⁴ 'Abd al Muṭṭalib al Ḥilli criticized Abd al Hamid and the Persian Shah and hailed al Khurāsāni for his constitutionalist and anti-Western attitudes. In 1910, he supported Ṭālib of Basrah and advocated his cause among the Fetla leaders. When the Italians invaded Libya he displayed enthusiastic Arab feelings.⁵ Nevertheless, he protested against the British occupation of Iraq and deserted public life and poetry.⁶ A similar attitude of constitutionalism, Arabism, and anti-Westernism was preached by Ja'far al Ḥilli⁷ and abu al Maḥāsīn al Muḥsin.⁸ All of those poets were Arab Shi'ah. Their predicament resembles the conflict which had captured all the reformers who tried to reconcile the incompatibles.

The reformers' impact on the Iraqi elite is evident. Al 'Urwa was widely read in Iraq and 'each of its issues caused great excitement'.⁹ Al Khālīṣī¹⁰

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1. I. al Ṭḥaṭḥā'i, op. cit., p.97
 2. Most of his 'nationalist' poems were written between 1846 and 1851; his collection, op. cit., pp.29-31, 88-90, 102-7. He wrote 'Our Arab ideas are valuable, but they were cheapened by the non-Arabs'. Ibid., p.102
وَبَنَاتِ افكارنا عربيه رخصت لى الامم، صغیرى
 3. Ṣ. al Qazwīni; Al Diwān, (Baghdad, Manuscripts), pp.111-2.
 4. Ibid., p.179 دما قبرین للفصحاء ماوى داین الترك من عرب العراق
 5. 'A. al Khaqānī, Shu'ra' al Hillah, Vol.3, (Najaf, 1951-1953), pp.196-230
 6. M. al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.326-8, 342, 344-5
 7. In 1895, al Ḥilli (d.1899) called on the Hashimites to lead an Arab rising, he praised al Shīrāzī for his opposition to Western incursion. In 1896-7, al Ḥilli condoned the Yemen rising. J. al Ḥilli, Siḥr Bābil, (Ṣāida, n.d.), pp.217-8, 358, 9, 422.
 8. A.M. al Muḥsin (b.1878). A constitutionalist who resented Turkish treatment of the Arabs but accused Arab nationalists of inviting Western occupation. M. al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.356-60, 364.
 9. 'A.M. Shamīs, Safīr Allah, (Cairo, 1969), p.65
 10. M. al Khālīṣī, Kitāb fi Sabīl Allah (Manuscripts) and an interview with Sheikh Hādī al Khālīṣī, (January 1970).

and al Sadr¹ were among the first to be influenced by the ideas of reforms and Arabism. Both were Arab Shi'ah and 'Alim of Kādimān and were to exercise an important intellectual and political influence on the Iraqi independence movement. During his stay in Iraq (1891), Afghāni established direct contacts with two prominent Iraqis; 'Abd al Muhsin al Kādimi and al Ḥabubi.²

Kādimi (1870-1935) was to become one of the three greatest Iraqi poets. Because of his 'conversion' to Afghāni's notions, he had to escape to Iran and then to Egypt³ (1899) where he was patronized and influenced by 'Abduh.⁴ Kādimi attacked the Ottoman oppression, welcomed the constitution,⁵ glorified the Arabs and demanded their unity and independence.⁶ Nevertheless he was to defend the Ottoman State when it was threatened by the West (during the Balkan and Libyan wars) and warned against western designs.⁷ For a short while he supported the Hijaz movement but turned against it at learning its alliance with the British.⁸

Ḥabubi (d.1915) was a Shi'i 'Alim and a poet who became a reformer and advocated scientific knowledge and Shi'i-Sunni unity.⁹ After his death, his Shi'i followers were divided into two schools; the Arab nationalists like al Shabībī brothers,¹⁰ al Sharqī,¹¹ and abu Timan¹² and the Islamic reformers.¹³ Prominent among the second group was Hibet al Dīn al Shahrīstānī. He published

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1. 'A. 'Ali, Za'im al Thawra al 'Irāqiya, (Baghdad, 1950), pp.19-26
 2. Infra, pp.
 3. R. Baṭi, Dīwān al Kādimi, Vol.2, (Cairo, 1948), pp.3-6
 4. R. al Kādimi and H. al Jādirjī, Al Kādimi, in Y. Izzidien (ed.), Shu'ra' al 'Irāq fi al Qern al 'Ashrīn, (Baghdad, 1969), p.34
 5. Al Kadimi, Dīwān ..., op. cit., pp.126-9
 6. Kādimi and Jādirjī, op. cit., pp.40, 52-5
 7. Kādimi, Dīwān, Vol.1, (Damascus, n.d.), pp.99-121
 8. Kādimi and Jādirjī, op. cit., p.40
 9. A. Fayyad, op. cit., p.84
 10. M.R. al Shabībī, Mudhekkerāt, (Manuscript, n.d.).
 11. Amal al Sharqī, Notes on her father.
 12. K. al Jādirjī Papers.
 13. *Prominent among them* al Jazā'ri, Baḥr al 'Ulum, al Jawāhir.

al 'Ilm (the Science) periodical in which he argued that there was no conflict between Islam and science.¹ In Najaf, he opened a library for the public to allow their acquaintance with the new trends spreading in Egypt and Syria.² He wrote a book in which he tried to reconcile Islam to the contemporary science and methods of thinking and reasoning. Needless to say that this attempt was also based on reviving the rational aspects of the tradition.³ Sharistāni was in contact with al Zahāwī⁴ and his ideas caused his conflict with the conservative circles in Najaf.⁵ He played an active role in the 1920 movement whose aim he defined as 'the establishment of an Arab kingdom'.⁶

The Iraqi intellectual movement reached a new era of maturity and originality with the rise of Ma'ruf al Ruṣāfi (1875-1945) and Jamāl Ṣadqī al Zahāwī (1863-1936). In 1905, Zahāwī assisted by Ruṣāfi, published a book in which he attempted the refutation of the Wahabi principles. He pointed out that their main opinions are the attribution of anthro-pomorphic qualities to God, the superiority of the Quran to all rational knowledge and the rejection of Ijtihād, Ijmā' and Qiyās. Zahāwī opposed this and argued that the exercise of the mind was needed to prove the existence of the Creator and the necessity of prophecy.⁷ He stressed that 'If a conflict occurred between reason and traditional teaching, the tradition should be explained to conform to reason'. Zahāwī argued that such a conclusion was logical when it is remembered that 'the transmitted knowledge would not be accepted as sacred but for the use of the intellect'.⁸

Ruṣāfi expressed his opinion that religion was not the outcome of supernatural revelation but an innovation of brilliant thinkers.⁹ Both Poets revealed their

1. Al 'Ilm, No.1 (1910), pp.4, 7, 22, No. 2 and 3, (1910), pp.128, 132

2. M. Maḥbuba, Mādi al Najaf wa Ḥaderuha, Vol.1, (Ṣaīda, 1934), p.120

3. H.D. al Shahrīstāni, Al Hayy'a wa al Islām, (Najaf, 1911)

4. Y. Izzedien, Fi al Adab al 'Arabi al Ḥadīth, (Baghdad, 1967), p.62

5. A. Wardi, Dirasa fi Ṭabi'at al Mujtama' al 'Irāqī, (Baghdad, 1965), p.252

6. 'A.R. al Ḥassani, Al Thawra al 'Irāqīya al Kubra, (Ṣaīda, 1965), pp.230-1

7. J. S. al Zahāwī, Al Fajr al Ṣādīq, (Cairo, 1323-1905), pp.27-8, 32-3

8. Ibid., pp.32-3

9. M. al Ruṣāfi, Dīwān ..., op. cit., pp.187-8. (My Negative Truth)

وان دليل النقل ان كان مانفاً - يؤول بالمقل الذي هو احكم

ولا ممن يرى الأدیان تامت - بوجهي منزلي للأنبياء - ولكن من وضع رابتاعي من العقلاء

doubts as to some essential Islamic doctrines like the resurrection and the eternity of the soul.¹ Ruṣāfi told Jādirji that he did not publish some of his writings fearing accusation of atheism.²

Nevertheless, Ruṣāfi stated in his will his belief 'in Allah and his Apostle Muhammad'.³ Furthermore, Ruṣāfi defended Islam and wrote:

'They unjustifiably claim that Islam is a barrier against progress. If that was so, then how did the early Moslems achieve progress'.⁴

It is clear that the two Poets had envisaged an 'Islam' which differed from the dominant 'one' prevailing at their time. Their notion found justification in drawing from an Islamic past as to bridge the gap with the European present.

Both Poets assumed a positive attitude towards scientific thinkers outside the fold of Islam. Zahāwi praised Renan, Buchner⁵ and Darwin and argued that they were more entitled to heaven than many Moslems who claim to be religious.⁶ Ruṣāfi hailed the 'liberal group composed of Christians, Jews and Moslems' who smashed the 'counter revolution' of 1909.⁷ Ruṣāfi called on Moslems and Christians to unite and achieve glory for the 'fatherland' which he defined as Arab rather than Iraqi or Ottoman. He argued that unity should be our religion and that if religion was to divide us, then it would be better to denounce it.⁸

In 1898, Zahāwi attacked Abd al Hamid and wrote:

1. Ibid., and (Tessā'ul Inquiry); J.S. al Zahāwi, Al Kalim al Mandum, (Beirut, 1328-1910), pp.116-7 Iyatuha al Samā'; Zahāwi, Al Lubāb, (Baghdad, 1928), p.326

2. K. al Jādirji Papers, Interview with al Ruṣāfi; the book was on the Prophet Muhammad.

3. A.B. Tabana, Ma'ruf al Ruṣāfi, (Cairo, 1947), pp.64-5

4. Ruṣāfi, Dīwān ..., op. cit., pp.128-30. Al Islām
يقولون في الاسلام ظلم بانهم يصعد ذرية عن طريق التقدم
ان كان ذا حفا تكيف تقدمت اولئك في عهد المنقذ

5. F.L. Buchner (1824-1899), wrote a book in 1855 in which he advocated a materialistic view of the universe and an explanation of Darwinism which was translated by Sh. Shumail.

6. Zahāwi, Al Kalim ..., op. cit., pp.118-9 الترادف
أيلقى (رنان) في الجحيم و (بخنجر)
و (دأدين) من عن اهلنا شفا

7. Ruṣāfi, Dīwān ..., op. cit., pp.374-7

8. Ibid., pp.131-4

وما خسر لو كان التعاون ديننا
أنشئت بأمر الدين وصاحده
فتميل بلدان وتأم من طهران
اذن ناتبناح الدين ياتم فسران
دعولامن تدلام صه ربك اننا
على كل حال في الموالين افوان

'Does the shadow of God on earth command what God and his honoured Prophet forbade, that he impoverishes the rich, banishes the innocent, imprisons without a reason, rapes and kills'.¹

Nevertheless, Zahāwī, in 1905 argued that the Caliphate should be retained by the Ottomans as the only way to preserve Moslem unity.² Ruṣāfi's poems did not escape similar 'conflicts'. To dispel the confusion, it is helpful to remember that the two poets, 'like the majority of Iraqi nationalists at that time, called for an Arab autonomy within a reformed Ottoman state'.³

It was logical that both Poets were to render an enthusiastic welcome to the declaration of the Constitution and to support the Committee of Union and Progress.⁴ It was suggested that they had joined the C.U.P. branch in Baghdad.⁵ However, Ruṣāfi denied that,⁶ although he became the editor of the Arabic section of Baghdād which was the mouthpiece of the C.U.P. in Iraq.⁷

However the state of amity between the Iraqi intelligentsia and the C.U.P. was of a short duration. When the failure of the C.U.P. to move towards 'an Arab autonomy within a reformed Ottoman state' became apparent, the reaction of Zahāwī and Ruṣāfi was different. Zahāwī decided to turn his back to Islam both in its political and ideological manifestations and to embrace the west in all its contents. Zahāwī 'became sceptical of everything except his existence and death',⁸ and considered atheism as a 'purely personal question'.⁹ His belief in Arab nationalism was firm and clear. 'Without Arab unity' Zahāwī argued, the Arabs 'will not be able to exist for long'.¹⁰ His nationalism

1. Zahāwī, Al Kalim ..., op. cit., pp.6-9

أيا من ظلم الله في أرضه بها
نفي الله عنه والرسول المبجل
نفيتم ذمال ديني مبدا
دسجن ظلمنا دسجني ديقتل

2. Zahāwī, Al Fajr ..., op. cit., pp.7-8

3. M.R. al Shabībī, Muqadema, in A. Tabana, op. cit., pp.10-11

4. Ruṣāfi, Dīwan ..., op. cit., pp.380-1; Zahāwī, Al Kalim ..., pp.51-8

5. R. Baṭī, Al Ṣahāfa fi al 'Irāq, (Cairo, 1955), p.22

6. K. al Jādirjī Papers.

7. R. Baṭī, Al Adab al 'Aṣri fi al 'Irāq, (Cairo, 1923), p.70

8. Zahāwī, Ruba'yāt al Zahāwī, (Beirut, 1924), p.160

9. Zahāwī, Al Awshāl, (Baghdad, 1934), p.6

10. Zahāwī, Al Thumala, (Baghdad, 1933), pp.42-3

was secular: 'All Arabs, whether Moslems, Christians or Jews form one nation'. Zahāwī opposed nationalism which sought glory in the past, 'Arab nationalism', he argued, 'should build a new glory in a new life'.¹

Zahāwī was deeply impressed by the advanced West. He attributed the Western culture to science, democracy and equality, freedom of thought and emancipation of women.² His enthusiasm towards Western culture might explain his political pro-British stance. In 1914, he was 'obliged' to sign a document supporting the Turks against his free will.³ In 1918 Zahāwī wrote:

'Oh Arab be wise and desert the Turks ...
Support the English, they are men of justice and honest
in their deeds and words'.⁴

He did not hide his pleasure at the return of Sir Percy Cox whom he publicly welcomed in a well known poem.⁵

Many writers have accused Zahāwī of opportunism and of selling out because of this poem. However, none has perceived that such an attitude⁶ was inherent in his philosophy of westernization and was associated with the attitude taken by many Arab nationalists of that period. Furthermore, a thorough reading of the poem indicates that Zahāwī was not, as has often been implied, a mere 'British stooge'. He welcomed Cox as an alternative to Wilson; he requested Cox to fulfil his promise of an Arab government, and left no doubt that his support of the British was based on the hope that they would bestow on Iraq the fruits of their culture. 'Alī al Sharqī, an Iraqi Arab nationalist, who was influenced by Ḥabūbī and afterwards by Shumāil⁷ was also reluctant to support the rising.⁸

1. Ibid., p.67

2. Zahāwī, Diwān, (Cairo, 1924), p.231; Al Kalim ..., op. cit., pp.9, 14-5; Al Lubāb, op. cit., p.67

3. M.S. al Daftari Papers

4. Al 'Arab, 15th February 1918. تجسسها العربي راترك
دوال الانكليز رجال عدل
ولا الترت من قوم لئام
وهدق في النفاق والكلام

5. Zahāwī, Diwān, op. cit., pp.320, 145-6, 110 عد للعراق راطلع منه ما فسد
رأيت به العدل رانح اهل الرخدا

6. Y. Izzidien, Al Zahāwī al Shā'ir al Qalaq, (Baghdad, 1962), p.27; H. Nāji, Al Zahāwī, (Cairo, 1962), p.37; 'A.R. al Hillālī, Al Zahāwī biyn al thawra wa al Sukut, (Baghdad, 1964), p.53

7. Amal al Sharqī notes on her father dated 11.5.74.

8. Y. Izzidien, Al Shi'r al 'Irāqī al Ḥadīth, (Baghdad, 1960), p.165

However, such attitudes were the exception rather than the rule. The growing animosity between the Turkish rule and the Iraqi intelligentsia, which could have clarified the distinction between Islam and nationalism, was interrupted by Western incursion. It was clear that the majority of Iraqi intellectuals feared Western encroachment more than the Turkish rule. The Italian invasion of Libya and the British campaign in Iraq were a turning point in Iraqi intellectual development. They produced a profound reaction of Arab nationalism which, at that time, was attached to Islam and anti-Westernism. Iraqi poets of that period were to go as far as denouncing the western culture itself which was viewed as an expansionist and destructive instrument hostile to Arabs and Moslems alike. Izzidien study of that period gives ample evidence of such an intellectual trend.¹

Ruṣāfi was the most notable exponent of such a trend. As early as 1909, he protested against the policies of the C.U.P. and warned that the Arabs 'will obtain their right by the sword'.² He supported the Arab societies³ and demanded Arab rights.⁴ Ruṣāfi's concept of Arab nationalism was secular and 'progressive'. He argued that it was meaningless to look back at the Arabs' past. The point, he asserted, was to reform the present and to build a new future⁵ based on science and knowledge.⁶

Nevertheless, Ruṣāfi disapproved of the 'Arab Conference' because it was held in Paris and described those who attended it as 'lambs appealing to a wolf for help'.⁷ He pointed out that his disappointment with the 'Arab movement' was originated when he became aware that some nationalists were seeking foreign support.⁸ In 1914, Ruṣāfi called for a Jihad to defend the 'fatherland' and

1. Ibid., pp.48-136

2. Ruṣāfi, Dīwān ..., op. cit., pp.389-91 شكري الى الدستور

3. Ibid., pp.391-3 في معرض السين

4. M. 'Ali, Adab al Ruṣāfi, (Cairo, 1947), pp.117-9

5. Ruṣāfi, op. cit., pp.34-6 نحن الماضي

6. Ibid., pp.65-8 الى الشبان

7. Ibid., pp.364-7 ما كنا ...

8. K. al Jādirji Papers

to liberate Egypt and Aden.¹ The actual destinies differed from the wishful desires. Baghdad fell to the British and Ruṣāfi in a futile but sentimental defiance to reality addressed the Turks and wrote:

'I am still faithful to you in spite of the cuts you left in my heart. Today I complain to you about you ...'.²

Ruṣāfi found in Yāsīn al Hāshimī (the leader of the 'militant' wing among Iraqi nationalist officers) a new hero. When Yāsīn was arrested by the British (1920), Ruṣāfi hailed him in a very strongly worded poem.³

Thus it is clear that the modernization school was appealing to the rising Iraqi intelligentsia. The combination of Arab nationalism, Islam, constitutionalism and anti-West proved to be the intellectual cornerstone of the Iraqi independence movement. Perhaps it was an irony that the failure of Arab nationalism to distinguish itself completely from Islam was to the advantage of the independence movement. Such a failure was behind the ease in which the nationalists and the Islamists were to conclude their anti-British alliance.

However, it is important to mention that such ideas were (up to 1919) confined to the small circles of the intelligentsia and lacked influence on the masses. It was the Administration's policy (1918-1920) which allowed such ideas to penetrate the public and the tribes and thus to assume a striking political force.

In fact a careful study of the Iraqi intelligentsia would reveal that during 1917-1918, many Iraqi intellectuals were to relax their anti-British attitude. The Turkish atrocities, coupled with the liberal Maude's declaration, had had their effect. On the 4th July 1917 and onward the British published al 'Arab newspaper in Baghdad. It was edited by Philby (followed by G. Bell)

1. Ruṣāfi, op. cit., pp.481-3 الوطن والجهاد

2. Ibid., pp.410-11 انا باقى على الفناء وان كا
نت بقلبي ممن احب جهرا
ناليهم ومنهم اليوم اشكو
بخصيم ستمائتي باري

3. Ruṣāfi, op. cit., p.451 باسين انت بالتدب مشيع
افانت للوطن العزيز مودع
ايين الذمام ونحن من جلفائهم
سرمان ما نقضر اليهود وضيعرا
ان اخبرجوك من الموالين مكرها
نا الشعب نملك صايم لا يجمع
لنموت معاهما بصلواتها
زره وسهم نها الصنف ركرم

and al Karmali, Zahāwī, Dujaylī, 'Uzry and al Baṣīr were among its prominent writers.¹ The Shabībī brothers (Riḍā and Bāqir) sided with the British up to late 1918.² In spring 1917, Ronald Storrs visited many Iraqi towns and met a large number of Iraqi leaders. He was warmly received and reported a considerable Iraqi support, especially among the Shi'ah, for Hussein's rising. Shahrīstānī and Karmali suggested to him to send an Iraqi delegation to Hijaz.³ It is my opinion that up to late 1918 the British were capable of encouraging a 'moderate' nationalist party, with which they could have come to terms. However, Wilson's obsolete imperialism was to extinguish any moderation and to render the violent clash as an inevitability.

1. R. Baṭī, Tārīkh al Ṣaḥafa fī al 'Irāq, (Cairo, 1955)

2. Infra, p.348.

3. R. Storrs, Orientalism, (London, 1939), pp.228-48

CHAPTER III.

ARAB NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN IRAQ DURING THE OTTOMAN PERIOD (1908-1916)

Iraq of the late 19th Century was not yet a fertile land for the growth of a national movement.¹ Unlike Egypt and the Levant, Iraq did not have close contacts with European ideas, missionaries or culture. The first mission (Carmelite) arrived in Basrah in 1623 and in Baghdad in 1721. They opened their first school in Baghdad in 1728, while they had been in Syria since 1226.² The Dominicans established their mission in Mosul in 1750 and opened their schools on a non-sectarian basis.³ They brought into Mosul its first printing press in 1860,⁴ and published their first Iraqi magazine, Iklīl al Ward, in 1902. The Carmelites introduced their magazine, Zuharyat Baghdād in 1905.⁵ Furthermore, the standard of Iraqi education was neither of a high level nor inspiring. The number of Iraqi students attending the available schools was not large,⁶ and apart from certain rich families there were no students sent abroad.

On the other hand, there were the seeds of change pushing their way through the Iraqi soil. The socio-economic conditions were giving way, after centuries of stagnation, to gradual but noticeable transformations which were bound to have political effects. Furthermore the Iraqi intelligentsia was not so far from the ideas of the Islamic reformers and Arab nationalists emanating from Syria and Egypt.

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1. Supra, pp. 1, 6, 9.
 2. H. Gallances, Settlement of the Carmelites in Mesopotamia, 17th and 18th Centuries, (London, 1927), p.329.
 3. S. al Šāiygh, Tārīkh al Muṣīl, Vol.1, (Beirut, 1928), p.323.
 4. Ibid., p.324
 5. 'A.R. al Ḥassani, Tārīkh al Ṣaḥāfa al 'Irāqiya, (Baghdad, 1957), p.25.
 6. According to al Hillālī, the total number of Iraqi students in 1914 was 19,499. 600 girls and 7,378 boys in governmental schools. 2,163 girls and 8,020 boys were in Private, religious and foreign schools. 1,338 were in military schools.
'A.R. al Hillālī, Tārīkh al Ta'līm fi al 'Irāq fi al 'Ahd al 'Uthmāni, (Baghdad, 1951), pp.248-252.

Political life in general and the national movement of Iraq in particular were growing and maturing rapidly largely owing to external factors, and only in part as a product of a gradual and natural development of the concrete and historical conditions emerging from the Iraqi soil as such. Two important events played an essential role in formulating Iraqi's political life. The first was the rise to power of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Ottoman Empire (1908). The second was the British Occupation of Iraq (1914-1921). This work is more concerned with the second event and its impact on the independence movement. However, a brief account of the first element is necessary to grasp the roots of such a movement.

Prior to the rise of the C.U.P., the Ottoman Empire was emphatically Islamic in its character and far from Turkish nationalist in its motives.¹ Bernard Lewis suggests that 'Ottoman... only acquired a national significance in the 19th Century under the influence of European liberalism'.² The Arabs enjoyed a favourable treatment under the Ottomans.³ 'Abd al Hamid, despotic as he was, could be accused of anything but Turkish chauvinism.⁴ In his attempt to preserve the integrity of the Empire, he allowed some Arabs to assume the highest possible posts during his era.⁵

The Ottoman constitutionalists were provoked by 'Abd al Hamid's decision in 1878 to abandon the 1876 constitution, 'the main criticism of this system (i.e. his personal rule) was that it gave the opportunity to participate in political life - even nominally - to very few'.⁶ The young Turks (the main opposition group), who had changed their name to the Committee of Union and Progress at their conference in 1902 in Paris, staged a military uprising in 1908.

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1. M. Bayhim, Al-'Arab wa al-Turk, (Beirut, 1957), p.80.
 2. B. Lewis, 'Islamic Revival in Turkey', International Affairs, Vol.28, No.1, January 1952, p.47.
 3. H. Gibb and H. Bowen, op. cit., Vol.1, Part, 1, p.160.
 4. G. Goach and H. Temperley, op. cit., Vol.V, pp.7-20. The most important posts were in the hands of non-Turkish elements.
 5. N. As. Sa'id, Arab Independence and Unity, (Baghdad, 1943), p.2.
 6. F. Ahmad, 'The Young Turk Revolution', The Journal of Contemporary History, Vol.3, No.3, (London, July 1968), p.19.

'Abd al Hamid capitulated and on the 23rd July he declared that Parliament would be convened in accordance with the 1876 constitution. On the 13th April 1909 'Abd al Hamid had to abdicate after an 'abortive attempt' on his part to challenge the C.U.P. Thus the Unionists were to entrench themselves in power and the new Caliph, a certain Muḥammad Rashad, was in reality a powerless ruler.¹

The victory of the C.U.P. in declaring the constitution brought about four new factors on the political scene of the Arab World which, in different ways, sparked off the flame of strong Arab national tendencies.

Firstly, the promulgation of the constitution was received by a large sector of the population with great jubilation and content.² Iraq was no exception from the rest of the Empire in displaying a joyful welcome at the new event.³ Men of letters, of 'progressive' tendencies,⁴ gave a warm tribute to the new era.⁵ However the new regime could not fulfil its promises. The reforms it brought about, relative and modest as they were, were unable to erase the backwardness and corruption of the Empire. After only a few years the new era was to disclose its lack of tolerance and revert to brutal oppression. That initial outburst of joy was soon replaced by political frustration and disappointment.⁶ This new bitterness paved the way for separatist inclinations and nationalist tendencies.

1. On the Young Turk and the C.U.P. see E.E. Ramsaur, Jr., The Young Turk - Prelude to the Revolution of 1908, (Princeton, 1957).
2. An eyewitness wrote: 'the whole Empire burst forth in universal rejoicing ... Moslems were seen embracing Christians and Jews ...'. H.H. Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, (New York, 1910), Vol. II, pp. 785-7.
3. 'A. Jawdat, Mudhekkirāt, (Beirut, 1967), p. 25.
4. For instance those Iraqi writers who supported the constitution were, Jamāl al Zahāwī, Ma'ruf al Rūṣāfī, Ridā al Shabībī, (Shi'i from Najaf, a prominent Arab nationalist), his brother Bāqir, 'Abd al Qādir al 'Ubiydi (Sunni from Basrah), 'Abd al Husseīn al Uzri (Shi'i from Baghdad), Kādīm al Duǧīī (Shi'i from Baghdad), Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ Shukir and 'Abd al Laṭīf Thunīyān (both Sunni from Baghdad and Arab nationalists).
5. A. Kh. al Maǧdisī, Al Tiyyārāt al Adbiya fi al 'Alām al 'Arabi al Mu'āṣir, 4th ed., (Beirut, 1967), pp. 45-8.
6. B. Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, (London, 1961), pp. 25-7; G. Bell, Amurath ..., op. cit., pp. 3-5; 'A. Jawdat, op. cit., pp. 25-7; S. Faīḍī, Fi Ghimrat al Niqāl, (Baghdad, 1952), pp. 194-5.

Secondly, the triumph of the C.U.P. provoked among certain Arab circles a profound resentment and dismay. This discontent was not motivated by the incompetence of the Unionists in fulfilling their promises, but by the very enunciation of constitutional goals. The slogan of equality and the restriction of the Sultan's authority was received with great irritation among some Iraqis,¹ who viewed the whole concept of al Mashrutiya with alarm and apprehension.²

This was the first outward sign of a deep political and intellectual split in Iraq society. Al Mashrutiya aroused wide public interest and the conflicts it created were not confined to narrow circles. In Iraq it was mainly supported by the Effendi group of Arab nationalist tendencies and a group of Shi'i 'ulemā' led by al Khurāsāni. Both³ envisaged an era of equality and freedom which suited their aspiration. This was the most important issue in which Arab nationalists and Islamic reformists were to be brought together.

In spite of the Government support, al Mashrutiya confronted a wide opposition and was condemned by leading notables and religious leaders, who did not approve of equality between rich and poor, Moslems and non-Moslems. The public was divided, but in the early stages of the conflict the majority sided with the 'conservative camp'.⁴ Amongst the opponents of the constitution were the Hashimites.⁵ In Iraq the opposition was led by an influential group of absentee landholders, Shi'i conservatives (al Yazdi group),⁶ and some Sunni notables. All considered the constitution as a threat to their conventional outlooks and social privileges and saw 'the Young Turk attitude to religion and the Caliph as destroying almost the only bond between Arabs and the Ottoman Government'.⁷

The 'conservative' opposition had soon gathered around al Mashwara group which was led by Sayid 'Abd al Raḥman al Kaylāni (Naqīb of Baghdad). Sa'id

1. T. al Suwaīdi, Mudhakkirāti, (Beruit, 1969), p.25.

2. 'A. al Wardi, Dirasa fī il Mujtama'al 'Irāqi, (Baghdad, 1965), pp.138, 380.

3. Iraqi Jews and Christians were among the supporters.

4. 'A.D. al A'dami, Mukhtaṣir Tārīkh Baghdad, (Baghdad, 1926), pp.249-51;
M.N.D. al Wā'id, Al Rawḍ al Izhar, (Mosul, 1949), pp.388-9.

5. 'A. Allah b. al Ḥussein, Mudhakkirāti, (Jerusalem, 1945), pp.22-6.

6. Infra., pp.334.

7. S.H. Longrigg, Iraq ..., op. cit., p.43.

al-Naqshabandi and 'Alā' al-Nā'ib¹ were among its new leaders.² Al Kāylāni, (the first Prime Minister of Iraq) was described as the 'most venerated among all the Sunni religious magnates of Iraq... He administered the rich waqaf lands of the Qadiriya and has valuable private estates'.³ It seems that the fact of him being a large absentee landholder,⁴ had made him consider the C.U.P. as a 'nightmare',⁵ and turned him into a firm supporter of any Government, Turkish or British alike.⁶

The conflict between the two groups assumed a wide intellectual encounter, political agitation and even street fighting. This generated a considerable political awareness and participation among the Iraqi public and ended the previous mental stagnation. However, it was perhaps tragic that the decisive Arab nationalist blow to Turkish domination was to come from quarters of anti-constitutional outlook, namely Hussein of Mecca whose 'conservative' views were well known.⁷

Thirdly, the most important factor in the impact of the C.U.P. on the rise of Arab nationalism lies in the Turkish nationalist character of the Unionists which sharply contrasted^{with} the Islamic colour of the previous era. This structural change in the Empire was brought about in two ways. Despite all Arab claims of major contribution to the C.U.P. takeover,⁸ the fundamental fact remains that 'the Young Turk Revolution was a patriotic movement of Muslim Turks'.⁹

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1. Both brothers were to become Arab nationalists and leaders of Baghdad's Ahd.
 2. Others were 'Isa al Jamil, 'Abd al Rahman al Haydari, Kādim Pasha (of very wealthy absentee landholders), Muḥammad Fāḍil al Dāghistāni (Senior military Officer), Mulla Najim al Wā'ḍ (the Sunni Qāḍi).
 3. F.O.371/126993/45315. Personalities - Iraq - Arab Bureau, 1917.
 4. C.O.696/1. Baghdad Vilyat Admin. Report, 1917, p.160; C.O.696/2. Admin. Report, 1918, Baqubah, p.17.
 5. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Tel.No.11669. From C.C. Baghdad, dated 29 December 1918.
 6. Infra., pp.
 7. A. Rihanī, Around the Coasts of Arabia, (London, 1930), p.20; Same author, Milūk al 'Arab, (Beirut, 1924), Vol.1, p.57.
 8. F. McCullagh, The Fall of Abdul Hamid, (London, 1910), pp.218-9.
 9. B. Lewis, The Emergence ..., op. cit., p.208; Also G. Gooch and H. Temperley, op. cit., Vol.IV, p.207. From Lowther to Grey,

The Arabs played a small and diminishing role in the movement and the regimes that grew out of it. Thus Arab participation in the composition of the Ottoman Government was to dwindle in comparison to 'Abd al Hamid's rule.

What had seriously aggravated the problem was the undisguised Turkish nationalist tendencies of the Unionists and their unwise attempt at certain measures which provoked the Arabs and raised their national suspicions.¹ Al Maşri, an outstanding Arab nationalist,² explained how his hopes of forming an Arab-Turkish Empire resembling the union between Austria and Hungary³ had been shattered by the narrow "Pan-Turkish" or "Pan-Turanian" and anti-Arab ideas favoured by the C.U.P.⁴ Toynbee argued that:

'This chauvinistic Turkish regime /the C.U.P./... produced one potentous effect which was the precise opposite of what it had intended. It set out to turkify the whole Empire's population of the Ottoman Empire. In consequence the Ottoman Empire's Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslim subjects eventually became Arab-nationalists en masse'.⁵

Jamal Pasha (a prominent leader of the C.U.P. Minister of the Navy and C. in C. in Syria during the War) openly admitted the Turkish nationalist inclinations of the C.U.P. and proudly declared to the Arabs:

'Under the impression of the menace ahead /Turkish national spirit had gone to sleep/ the Young Turks rose with a zeal beyond praise. They took to arms to teach the Turks national spirit and the virtues associated with it. That has been the object of all their endeavours for the last two or three years'.⁶

Fourthly, the victory of the Unionist and the revival of the constitution provided relative liberties to the press, freedom of thought and expression

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1. For an Arab account of C.U.P. atrocities, see: A. Dāghir, Al Thawra al 'Arabiya (Cairo, 1916), pp.90-130.
 2. M. Khadduri, 'Aziz 'Alī Al Mişrī and the Arab Nationalist Movement', St. Anthony's Papers, No.17, Middle Eastern Affairs, No.4, (London, 1965), pp.140-63.
 3. Such ideas were also current among Turkish nationalist thinkers. In 1918, Ziya Gokalp 'The spiritual father of Turkish nationalism' proposed 'a federation or confederation of two independent states, Turkish Anatolia and Arabistan', U. Heyd, Foundations of Turkish Nationalism (London, 1950), p.131.
 4. F.O.371/3396/14436. 'Interview with Aziz Ali Bey El Masri', dated 14th January 1918. From Arthur Hardinge to James Balfour.
 5. A. Toynbee, 'Aspects of Arab History', op. cit., p.294. Toynbee draws the attention to that 'Pan-Turanianism offered a lever for breaking up the Russian Empire' within whose frontiers two-thirds of the Turkish-speaking peoples live'. A. Toynbee and K. Kirkwood, Turkey, (London, 1926), p.57
 6. A. Djemel Pasha, Memories of a Turkish Statesman 1913-1919, (London, 1922), p.200

and the establishment of political organizations. Prior to July 1908, only three papers were published in Iraq.¹ It goes without saying that any serious treatment of the prevalent conditions was absent from their columns. After the constitution and between the years 1908-1914, some 70 new papers were published in Iraq.² New subjects, hitherto not for public discussion, were to be encountered with frankness and seriousness, 'the basic problems of religion and nationality, of freedom and loyalty in the modern state, were discussed and examined'.³ Some editors provoked the wrath of the Authorities and consequently their arrest and the closure of their papers.⁴

It is clear that the C.U.P. had helped to alter the course of . . . history in the Asiatic part of the 'Arab World'. By trying to 'turkify' the Empire or, more accurately, to 'centralise' its administration it set loose the separationist or national tendencies. By attempting to bring politics from the 'kingdom of heaven' to the world of the masses, it released political organisations and trends which it was unable to contain. And by putting reforms on the agenda, it had cultivated hopes which in reality it could not meet.⁵ If the roots of 'Arab nationalism' were in existence long before the rise to power of the C.U.P., it is certain that the growth of Arab nationalism was

1. al Zawra' in Baghdad (1896-1917), al Muṣl (1885-1918), al Basrah (1889-1914).

2. al Hassani, Tārikh . . ., op. cit., pp.50-1; G. Kirk, op. cit., p.122.

3. B. Lewis, op. cit., p.208.

4. For instance: (i) al Biqād, S. Faīdi, Basrah (May to August 1909); (ii) Idhār al Haq, Q. Jilmirān, Basrah (July to August 1909); (iii) al Ati, 'Omar Fawzi, a Sunni lawyer, supporter of Ṭālib, Basrah (August 1911-December 1912); (iv) al Nahda, Muzāḥim al Bājhji, Sunni lawyer, of a rich and influential family, a leader of the National Club Soc. (1912) Baghdad (October 1913-closed after 11 issues only); (v) Bayn al Nahriyn. M.N. al Tabāḥjālī, Sunni of an influential Baghdadi family (January 1909-March 1910); (vi) al Raqib, 'A.L. Thuniyān, Sunni, Baghdad (January 1909-closed in late 1910); (vii) al Dastur, 'A.W. Tabṭīḥai, Shi'i, Basrah (March to September 1912); (viii) al Rawḍa, 'A.H. al Uzri, Shi'i, Baghdad (August 1910-August 1911); (ix) al Riṣāfa, S. al A'raji, Shi'i, Baghdad (March to July 1911); (x) Sada Bābil, Dāoud Ṣīliwāh, Christian, Baghdad (November 1909-1914); (xi) Lughat al 'Arab, Instās al Karmali, Christian, Baghdad (closed in 1914). After 1914, all unofficial papers were closed and all their editors were under orders of arrest.

5. All the previously mentioned factors were coupled with the ever increasing weakness of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the independence movements among its subordinate 'nations'. In 1683, the Ottoman Empire reached its zenith of power. Since that date, the following countries were to gain independence, or to be lost by the Empire: Hungary (1699), Crimea (1784), Egypt (1808), Serbia (1878), Rumania (1878), Greece (1882), Bulgaria (1908), Bosnia (1908), Tripoli (1912), Albania (1913), etc.

encouraged by the policies carried out by the C.U.P. However, this growth by no means crystallized to the point of demanding complete independence from the Ottoman Empire. Apart from the socio-economic conditions, it seems that unity of religion (with the Turks), fear of Western intentions, and military impotence were good reasons for making Arab nationalists reluctant to break away from the Empire.¹

The first attempts at establishing political parties in Iraq (1908-1912) were characterized by the fact that they were virtually extensions of political organizations already in existence in Turkey itself.² The C.U.P. opened its first branch at Baghdad in 1908. But its membership was basically confined to Officials, Army Officers and some Jews. However it gained the support of some progressive Iraqis like al Rūṣāfi and al Zahāwi.³ Its Basrah branch was more popular thanks to Tālib's support which, however, did not last for long. The 'conservative' opposition to the C.U.P. occurred in 1911 and was centred around the Moderate Liberal Party. It derived its support from the members of the dissolved Mashwara and was led by Maḥmūd, the son of al Kaylāni.

In its early stages the Arab national opposition to the C.U.P. was gathering strength around the Freedom and Accord Party who opened its branches in Baghdad (1909) and Basrah (1911). However this period of identifying Iraqi political organizations with Turkish ones did not last for long. Growing disillusionment paved the way for the emergence of Iraqi groups which were attached to Arab organizations.

Prior to 1908 there were several Arab societies, mainly in the Levant, advocating some Arab aims. Most of them were led by Arab Christians.⁴

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1. In this regard the following phenomena might be pointed out: the Jihād movement in support of the Turks;⁽ⁱ⁾ the departure of Arab officials with the retreating Turkish troops⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ and the absence of any separationist demand in the programmes of Arab nationalist groups.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾
 - (i) Infra, pp. 105-7.
 - (ii) T. Mushtāq, Awraq Ayāmi (Beirut, 1968), p.19; Cmd.1060, Review of Civil Administration in Mesopotamia 1914-1920, (H.M.S.O.1920), pp.1,3,31.
 - (iii) Infra, pp. 68, 122-3.
 2. They were the C.U.P.: al Ḥizb al Ḥurr al Mu'tadil (Moderate Liberal Party); and Ḥizb al Ḥurriya wa al I'tilāf (the Freedom and Accord Party).
 3. Y.Izzidien, Al Shi'r al 'Irāqi al Ḥadīth (Baghdad, 1960), pp.37-8.
 4. Dr. 'A.K. Ghirāiyba, Suriya fi al Qarn al Tāsi 'Ashir (Cairo, 1961), pp. 215-33.

The declaration of the Constitution paved the way for the establishment of new groups which differed from the old ones in two major points. Firstly, they were initiated by, and appealed to, Arab Moslems and secondly they were more vigorous in their demands for Arab rights short of independence. Of these societies the important ones were: al Ikhā' al 'Arabi al 'Uthmāni (1908; its founder, Shafiq Bey al Mua'yyd, was hanged by the Turks in 1915), al Qahtāniyah (1909), al 'Arabiyah al Fatāt (the Young Arab, 1910), Hizb al lā Markaziya al Idāriya al 'Uthmāni (Ottoman Decentralization Party, Cairo 1912), and the totally underground party al 'Ahd.¹ Only the Decentralization Party and al 'Ahd are directly relevant to our discussion because of their activities in Iraq.

The Ottoman Decentralization Party called for an Arab conference to discuss the Arab cause and to put forward the Arab demands. The Conference was held in Paris during 18th-23rd June 1913 and was the first attempt of that sort. Iraq was represented by Tawfiq al Suwaīdi and Sulaymān 'Anbir (both were students in Paris) and the Conference received, at least, two supporting telegrams from Iraq, the first sent from Sayid Ṭālib of Basrah² and the other from Baghdad.³

Suwaīdi points out the existence of three trends within the Conference, the reformists who were seeking equality between Turks and Arabs (mainly Arab Moslems), the anti-Turks (mainly Arab Christians) and the 'position-seeking'

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1. The demands of these societies varied from greater local privilege and wider local powers, higher proportion of appointments, recognition of the Arabic language as an official one to local autonomy and decentralization. Moreover, none of these groups called, openly or secretly, for independence. Muṣṭafa al Shihābi, op. cit., pp.68-83.
 2. Al Mu'tamir al 'Arabi al Awal, issued by the High Committee of the Decentralization Party (Cairo 1913), p.6. In addition to his support Ṭālib declared in his telegram that 'the Arab nation, in all its countries, should have a national existence' and that 'its political and economic rights are suppressed by the Ottomans'.
 3. It was signed by some Baghdadi men of influence, e.g. 'Abd al Lāṭif al Mudalil, Bahjat Ziynal, Muzāhim al Bājahji, etc.; Tawfiq al Suwaīdi, op. cit., p.30.

people like 'Abd al Hamīd al Zahrāwī.¹ However, it is evident that the general trend of the Conference, although 'ideologically' promoting the Arab nationalist cause as never before, showed a persistent and sincere desire to preserve the unity of the Empire.

Iskandir 'Ammoun (a Christian and one of the Decentralization Party's leaders) commenced his speech, which was given at the outset of the Conference, by denouncing any separationist tendencies and argued that:

'The Arab nation (Umma) wants nothing but a change in the form of the Government ... we desire an Ottoman government which is to be neither Turkish nor Arab, a government in which all the Ottomans would enjoy equal rights and exert equal obligations'.²

Suwaīdi's speech emphasized the existence of the Arabs as a nation and the desire for reforms and decentralization.³ 'Abd al Ghani al 'Uraysi⁴ argued that in accordance with all theories of Nationalism the Arabs 'do form a nation which should have rights of jinsiyah (nationalism)'. Nevertheless, 'Uraysi stressed that 'we do not want separation as long as our rights are respected and preserved'.⁵

In spite of the Conference's modesty in its demands, and despite the C.U.P.'s official acknowledgement of the Conference, it failed to raise the enthusiasm of some prominent Arab nationalist leaders. 'Azīz 'Alī, for instance, opposed it on two counts. Firstly, he criticized the holding of the Conference in the capital of a foreign power, and secondly, he thought it was untimely to forward such demands while the Ottomans were at war with the Balkan states.⁶ Sharif Hussein of Mecca, from a different standpoint, sent a telegram to the Turkish authorities condemning the Conference and accusing its members of treason and 'rendering services to the foreigners'.⁷

1. Ibid., pp.26-31. Such a view is confirmed by Shakīb Arsalān's Sirra Dhātiya (Autobiography), (Beirut 1969), pp.109-110. Zahrāwī paid a high price to prove his dedication to the Arab Cause. He was hanged in 1915 by the Turks.

2. Al Mu'tamir al 'Arabi al Awal, op. cit., pp.103-4

3. T. al Suwaīdi, op. cit., p.29

4. He was hanged by the Turks in 1916.

5. Al Mu'tamir al 'Arabi al Awal, op. cit., pp.42-50

6. Ahmed Shafīq Pasha, Mudhkerāti fi Nusif Qarn, Vol.3, (Cairo), p.82.

7. Al Suwaīdi, op. cit., p.25

The Conference was concluded by an agreement with a representative of the Ottoman Government in which the following demands were to be fulfilled; the official language in Arabic countries should gradually become Arab, the language of Education in Arabic areas should be in Arabic, all senior officials, except the Walis, should be familiar with the Arabic language and be locally appointed; in principle there should be at least three Arab ministers in the Cabinet, five Arab Walis and ten Arab Mutasarrifs.¹

The Decentralization Party who organized the Conference, had influenced, politically and ideologically, the emerging nationalist movement in Iraq which was represented, in embryonic form, in the National Club of Baghdad and the Reformist Society of Basrah. Both had adopted the political programme of the Decentralization Party and were in constant contact with its leadership in Egypt.²

The Decentralization Party was formed in Egypt in 1912-1913 by some of the Syrian intellectuals who, although differing in ideological motives and political inclinations, were in agreement on two major points, the unity of the Ottoman Empire and the necessity of a decentralized administration in which the Arabs would be provided with full rights. The political programme of the Party included articles which reveal the tendencies of its aspirations:

'Article I ... Every one of its vilayets (the Ottoman State) is an inseparable part of the Sultanate which is itself indivisible under all circumstances. But the local administration of every vilayet will be on the basis of decentralization ...

Article IV. In the capital of every vilayet, there will be organized a General Assembly, an Administrative Council, a Council on Education and a Council on Awqaf.

Article XIV. Every vilayet will have two official languages, Turkish and the local language of its inhabitants.

Article XV. Education in every vilayet will be in the language of the inhabitants of that vilayet'.³

In a book published in 1907, Rafiq al 'Azm (President of the D.P.)⁴ argued

1. S. Faïdi, op. cit., pp.129-30. Compare this with the administration's ethnic structure under A.T. Wilson's era. Infra, pp.

2. S. Faïdi, op. cit., pp.98, 116; M. al Başır, op. cit., pp.37-41

3. al Manār, Vol.16, Pt.3, Cairo March 8th 1913, pp.229-231 cited by Zein, op. cit., pp.97-8.

4. The leading Committee of the O.D.P. consisted of al 'Azm, 'Ammoun (deputy president, Haqi al 'Azm (secretary), Muhib al Dīn al Khaṭīb (deputy secretary) Ridā, Shumail and Jridīni (members).

that the bonds of nationalism and homeland were more important than that of religion.¹ He asserted that religious differences among the Arabs should not handicap the growth of Arab nationalism.² Nevertheless, 'Azm advocated an 'Islamic League' to defend Moslems' rights against the Christian nations of the West.³ He believed that the Caliphate should be entrusted with the Turks and warned against transferring it to the Arabs.⁴ The views of Rashīd Ridā⁵ and al 'Ahd⁶ were not very different in that respect. Arab or Iraqi 'independence' was not therefore then envisaged by Arab nationalists as an urgent aim.

The Arab 'nationalist' opposition to the policies of the C.U.P. was represented by several organisations which varied according to the different conditions surrounding them (i.e. the geographical position, the social structure, and the allowed degree of political opinion). These conditions were inevitably to be reflected in the political programme of each organisation.

Mosul: Arab national consciousness was neither profound nor active. Faīdi, in attempting to explain the weakness of the Arab nationalist movement in Mosul, pointed out the strength of the religious (Islamic) tendency which constituted an obstacle to the growth of Arab nationalism.⁷ This may be a true statement but invites question since it tries to explain the feebleness of nationalism by reference to the religious strength, a fact which in itself needs an explanation. It is very interesting to note the shifting roles (in regard to Arab nationalism) of Basrah and Mosul, according to the changing historical circumstances (of Turkish domination and British occupation). While one finds that

1. R. al 'Azm, Al Jāmi'ah al Islāmiya wa Awrupa, (Cairo, 1907), p.4.

2. Ibid., p.50

3. Ibid., pp.8-9

4. A. Šāigh, Al Hāshimiyun wa al Thawra al 'Arabiya al Kubra, (Beirut, 1966), p.49

5. Supra, pp.43-5,

6. Infra, pp.122-3.

7. S. Faīdi, op. cit., p.121

Basrah was virtually the main centre of 'Arab nationalist activities' during the Turkish era, especially after 1910, Mosul, on the other hand, was, relatively speaking, much less affected by the nationalist trend. However, during the British occupation, Mosul was to become an important focus of discontent and of Arab nationalist activities, while Basrah was to relinquish its pioneering role of being the 'vanguard' of Arab nationalism in Iraq. The following factors might cast a light on the nature of the Arab nationalist movement in Mosul (its weakness, strength and social structure):

(a) the geographical proximity of Mosul to Turkey with its obvious implications and consequences was an element in suppressing the development of an Arab nationalist movement in Mosul during the Turkish era. By contrast, that very same reason played a role in accelerating the growth of such a movement during the British rule (coupled with the remoteness of Mosul from the centre of British power and military strength);

(b) the ethnic composition of the Mosul Wilayat was by no means as Arab as that of Basrah or Baghdad. Out of a population of just less than half a million, the Arabs comprised little over one third of it.¹ It has been argued that other ethnic groups were resolutely against Arab domination.² However, one should point out that the Arab population of Mosul was not dispersed over the Wilayat but rather concentrated in the city of Mosul and its suburban towns and villages; this factor accounted for the rise of an interesting form of political consciousness. A sharp awareness of Arabism was modified by an Islamic outlook. The first to stress the subjective entity and the second to accommodate the non-Arab moslems of the area. Being surrounded by a large non-Moslem community, the Arab Moslems found an assurance in adopting an 'Islamic Arabism', resenting Western influence and looking towards Syria and even Turkey.

1. C.O.696/3. Mosul Administration Report 1920, p.25. According to Lieut-Col. L.F. Nadler, P.O. of Mosul, the population was composed of:

170,663 Arabs	241,655 non-Arab races
179,820 Kurds	232,578 non-Kurdish races
321,893 Moslems	90,506 non Moslems

2. F.O.371/4147/146/144; quoting the P.O. of Mosul (then Colonel Leachman);

'1. All classes of Christian are now firmly in favour of direct British control.

2. Yazidis of Sinjar ... formally demanded that no Muslim should be given a government post in the area.

3. Kurds ... are strongly anti-Arab'.

(c) attention should be drawn to a socio-historical fact which differentiated Mosul from the rest of Iraq. The Turkish centralization policy which necessitated the destruction of tribal federations, the abolition of family rule and the liquidation of 'feudal estate' in Iraq took place (in an effective way) during and after the days of Midhat Pasha (1869-1872). However, Mosul represented an exceptional case in regard to that historical process. The destruction of Mosul's family rule and its subjugation to the Turkish central authority took place in a much earlier phase and with decisive and positive results. The wealthy family of al Jalili ruled Mosul from 1730 after gaining the Ottoman consent because of their active role in defending Mosul against the invasion of Nadir Shah of Persia (1726).¹ Al Jalili lost popularity because of their economic exploitation and monopoly² and a popular uprising led by the al 'Umari family ousted them in 1826. Nevertheless, al Jalilis were reinstated in Mosul thanks to direct Ottoman intervention.³ However, in 1828, Qassim al 'Umari led a new and successful uprising; he exiled Yahya al Jalili to Aleppo and appointed himself as Wali of Mosul with the tacit approval of the then powerless Ottomans.⁴ In 1830, Yahya al Jalili, aided by Sheikh Safouk of Shammār Jarba and encouraged by Ibrāhīm Pasha of Egypt (then in control of Syria), invaded Mosul and re-established his authority.⁵ This was a turning point in the history of Mosul. The Turks, although originally in favour of al Jalili, were moved by their fear of the Egyptian menace to oust the Jalili rule once and for all, and by 1833 Mosul was totally under Turkish control.⁶ It was the Egyptian threat which had, to a large extent, motivated the Turks into liquidating the family rule in Mosul, to impose conscription (for the first time in the history of Ottoman Iraq) and to establish a strong military presence.⁷

1. S. al Sāiygh, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., pp.274-5, 282-8.

2. Dr. 'Abd al 'Azīz S. Nawār, Dāoud Pasha Wālī of Baghdād 1817-1831, (Cairo, 1968), p.147. Originally an M.A. thesis 1956 to 'Ain Shims Univ. U.A.R.

3. 'Abbās al 'Azāwi, Tārīkh al 'Iraq biyn Ihtillāliyn, Vol.6, (Baghdad 1955), p.299

4. Ibid.

5. Dr. 'Abd al 'Azīz S. Nawār, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., pp.83-4.

6. 'Abbās al 'Azāwi, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., Vol.7, (Baghdad, 1956), p.26

7. Dr. Nawār, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., pp.85-6

Thus the absence of politically powerful families had deprived the nationalist movement in Mosul of a paternal leader who was almost, in those given historical conditions, a necessity for the development of any political organization.¹ On the other hand, this same factor had contributed largely towards the radical nature (social and political) of the movement in Mosul. Whereas the leadership of the national movement in Basrah was dominated by wealthy elements and that of Baghdad by persons of the upper middle class, the leadership of the national movement in Mosul was made up of individuals of the lower middle class, of humble origin and even sometimes from an impoverished social background;

(d) the socio-economic structure of Mosul, and its political implications:

Without going into much detail, there are some important remarks which are of direct concern to the Arab national movement in Iraq:

(i) It has been stated that Mosul has been for a long time a centre and commercial station for Mosul's and Iraq's trade directed to the north (Turkey) and the west (Syria, Aleppo and Damascus).² Thus, it is understandable that the commercial classes of Mosul had a special interest in preserving political links with Turkey and Syria. Even when Iraqi trade generally, including that of Mosul, was shifting away from the Middle East markets to those of Europe and the British Empire (from 1884), the Turkish and Syrian markets continued to be major consumers of the Mosul trade.³ This economic factor might explain the radical shift in the political attitude of Mosul's politicians from one of submissiveness toward the Turks to one of violent resistance to the British. This same factor casts a light on the political shift in the attitude of some small merchants⁴ from being outside the national movement during the Turkish era to assuming an active role in it during the British period.

1. al Kaylāni of Baghdad patronized the 'conservative' opposition, al Suwaīdi backed the emerging nationalist movement and al Naqib of Basrah was the guardian of the political movement in his area.

2. Dr. Muḥammad S. Hassan, op. cit., p.89.

3. Ibid., p.131.

4. Some small merchants were to join the nationalist movement (Al-'Ahd) in Mosul after the British occupation, (e.g. Ibrāhīm 'Aṭār Bāshi, Muṣṭafa al Jalīlī, Muḥammad Amīn al 'Umari, 'Abdullah al 'Umari). All of them came from very wealthy families but were not themselves wealthy.

(ii) Land system in Mosul:

The suspension of land registration which occurred in 1880 and 1882 did not include Mosul and the northern parts of Iraq.¹ Thus the tāpu system went on unhindered. 'Eventually tāpu land in Mosul was to represent the highest proportion in all of Iraq.'² The injustices which accompanied the 'distribution' of land according to that system have already been pointed out.³ However, it seems that Mosul stood out as a sharp example of such unfairness.⁴ The economic and political implication of such conditions necessitated the complete dependence of land holders on the government to 'protect' their 'property' in the face of the fellāhin anger. Unlike Basrah,⁵ the landholders of Mosul derived their domination over the land from the sheer force of the government and its will. Consequently, the land holders of Mosul were in no position to practice any opposition to the ruling authority. The Political Officer of Mosul wrote in 1919:

'... I have little doubt that the poorer classes appreciate our administration ... With the city magnates, landowners and intellectuals the case is not so clear. These classes didn't as a rule feel the hardship of Turkish Administration, but on the contrary were able in various direct and indirect means to benefit from it.'⁶

Faīdi, who visited Mosul in August 1913 on an assignment from Sayid Tālib to contact the Arab nationalists in order to harmonize action, referred to the limited number of those who worked for the cause. According to Faīdi the Arab nationalists among the officers of the Turkish army stationed in Mosul were Yāsīn al Hāshimi (Chief of Staff), Mawlud Mukhlis, 'Ali Jawdat and 'Abd Allah al Dulaīmi. Among the civilians, Faīdi found Sa'īd Ḥāji Thābit, Ibrāhīm 'Aṭar Bashi (both were merchants of medium financial capacity), Ḥāji Ayub 'Abd al Wahid (shopman) and Dāoud Jalabi (medical doctor). Faīdi claims that out of those people, and

1. Supra, p.27, footnote 2.

2. E. Dowson, op. cit., p.11.

3. Supra, pp.24-6

4. G. Bell wrote '... a peasant would be offered for his land 25 per cent of its value, and on his refusal to sell, he would be cast into prison on a trumped up charge of murder ... unless he changed his mind'. Cmd.1061, op. cit., p.54.

5. Infra, p. 78-80.

6. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Mosul, 1919, p.7

others recruited by them,¹ he was able to form a secret society working for the Arab nationalist cause.² However, this society was inactive and vanished shortly after its establishment.³ Nevertheless, in 1914 and just before the World War some Arab civilians formed a new society which they called the Secret Flag Society ('Alam).⁴ Its leading committee was composed of Thābit 'Abd al Nur (President, an educated Christian who joined the Hijaz rebellion afterwards), Maki Sharbati (succeeded al Nur in the Presidency), Muḥammad Rau'f al Ghulami (a distinguished man of letters) and Rau'f al Shahwāni (a student who became a military officer afterwards).⁵ The Flag Society existed up to May 1919 when it merged with al 'Ahd.⁶ During the War it was in contact with Hijaz and secretly active in agitating the Arab population and soldiers against the Turks.⁷

The Arab opposition to the C.U.P. in Baghdad took, in its embryonic form, the position of demanding equality for Arabs and Turks rather than claiming decentralization or separation. Furthermore, such an opposition assumed itself as part of the Turkish political structure rather than being an external force. Thus a group of young intellectuals⁸ were gathered around Bayn al Nahrain (Mesopotamia) newspaper (first published 6th December 1909) to express their desire for reforms, progress and Arab rights. They formed Baghdad's branch of Hizb al Hurriya wa al I'tilāf (Party of Freedom and Accord) which was in reality a Turkish party opposing the C.U.P.'s policies and in sympathy with Arab demands.

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1. Among other names which Faiḍi mentioned are Maki Sharbati, 'Abd Allah Bash 'Alim, Muḥammad Rau'f al Ghulāmi, etc.
 2. Faiḍi, op. cit., pp.121-4
 3. M.Ṭ. al 'Umari, op. cit., Vol.3, p.45
 4. Mu'arrikh (Historian) ('Abd al Mun'aim al Ghulāmi), Safahāt Maṭwiya min Tārikh al Haraka al Qawmiya, Ṣada al Ahrār Newspaper, No.158, Series 4, Mosul 9th May 1952.
 5. It is interesting to observe that all of them were from a humble social background.
 6. 'A. Ghulāmi, op. cit., No.179, Series 25, Mosul 10th October 1952.
 7. Ibid., No.163, Series 9, 13th June 1952
 8. Among those young intellectuals there were Maḥmud Nadīm al Ṭabaqjali, Kāmil al Ṭabaqjali (both belong to a well-known family and were journalists), Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ Shukir, Ibrāhīm Hulmi al 'Umar, Ḥamdi al Bājahji.

for equality.¹ This group of young Baghdadi intellectuals was backed by Yusif al Suwaïdi and was in close contact with Sayid Tālib of Basrah, who sponsored the establishment of the Basrah branch of the same party and who rendered considerable financial support and protection to the Baghdadi group.²

However, the mounting disillusionment with Turkish politics eventually convinced some of the young Arabs to relinquish their ties with Turkish political parties and to step up their national demands for decentralization instead of mere equality. Thus a new society was formed in late 1912 under the name of the National Club Society which was of a more radical and daring Arab nationalist nature. This new society was also backed by Yusif al Suwaïdi and Tālib Pasha and it was soon linked to the Reform Society of Basrah (formed by Tālib Pasha on the 28th February 1913). In fact, the two societies of Basrah and Baghdad had adopted the programme of the Ottoman Decentralization Party and became disguised branches of that Party.³

Among the active members of the National Club were the finest intellectuals of Baghdad at the time, some of whom came from humble families and others from very wealthy origins but were not by necessity representing their families' political outlook. It is interesting to note that the active membership of this Society contained some of the young Shi'i and a large number of Officers serving in the Turkish armed forces. Among this Society's active members were: Muzāhim al Bājahji, newly graduated lawyer, belonging to a very wealthy family, Sunni, President of the Society and editor of al Nahda; Hamdi al Bājahji, Lecturer at the College of Law; Ibrāhīm Nāji, an educated Sunni with a degree in Law; Ibrāhīm Hulmi al 'Umar, a famous man of letters, Sunni; Bahjat Zaynal, student at the Law College, Sunni; Sheikh Muḥammad Bāqir al Shabībi, 'One of the

1. This Party was formed by a certain Şadiq Bey (Brigadier in the Turkish Army and former leader of the C.U.P.) and other ex-members of the C.U.P. who were alarmed at the tyrannical behaviour of the Unionists. This party was strengthened when Hussein Hulmi Pasha and Mahmud Mukhtar Pasha (former Turkish Prime Ministers) had joined its ranks. The party was very appealing to the Arab politicians who feared the fanatic Unionists. However this party did not last for long and was suppressed by the C.U.P.

2. Faiḍi, op. cit., pp.82, 98, 116.

3. M. al Baṣir, op. cit., pp.37-41

most enlightened Shi'i of Iraq*, man of letters; Sheikh Muḥammad Riḍā al Shabībī, a very well educated Shi'i from Najaf, man of letters, poet and political writer; Razūq Ghanām Christian Arab from Baghdad, editor of a newspaper; Mubdir al Fir'un, an educated tribal Sheikh of al Fatla of the Middle Euphrates. Tahsīn al 'Askari; 'Abd al Ḥamīd al Shālji; Yusīf 'Iz al Dīn; 'Abd al Laṭīf al Falāḥi, Maḥmud Adīb, Maḥmud Bā'qubah; all of them were Sunni police officers serving in Baghdad.

Yusif al Suwaīdi, the head of the influential family, was the guiding spirit behind the nationalist movement in Baghdad. Suwaīdi was born in 1854 in Baghdad where he received some education in Arabic and Religious studies which enabled him to become a judge during the Turkish days. He was described in a British official report dated in 1917, as:

'... Ashraf al Ashraf. Second only to the Naqib in Baghdad. Descended from the Abbasid Khalif. A staunch member of the Arab National Party... His known connection with the liberal party (Freedom and Accord) made him an object of suspicion of the C.U.P.'.¹

When the pro-C.U.P. prime minister, Maḥmud Shawkat Pasha, was assassinated in June 1913 without a conspicuous motive, the Unionists seized the opportunity to put an end to the opposition and to tighten their grip on the Empire. Among several others, Suwaīdi was imprisoned. However, in September 1913, after his release, Suwaīdi was elected, in defiance of the Unionists, as a member of the Dulaim constituency to the first General Council of Baghdad Wilayat, a Council which was predominantly anti-Unionist. In August 1914, Suwaīdi's son Thābit (Qāiymaqām in the Turkish Administration) was murdered on the orders of the Unionists because of his declared opposition to the massacre of the Armenians at Diyār Bakr.² In 1915, Suwaīdi was re-arrested and brought before the Aley Tribunal by order of Jamal Pasha. He was exiled and only allowed to return after the Armistice.

The career of Sayid Tālib Pāsha al Naqib of Basrah in Iraqi politics and the history of the nationalist movement during the years 1908-14 was a distinguished one. What is more interesting is that Basrah and not Baghdad, Najaf

1. F.O.371/126993/45315 dated 26th June 1917

2. Ibid

or Mosul, was largely the centre of the rising national movement. The man and the town were organically linked and a product of certain historical conditions prevailing at that time.

Basrah was geographically at the extreme end of the waning Ottoman Empire neighbouring two Arab Sheikhdoms (Muḥammarah and Kuwait) which were under British protection giving their Sheikhs a certain status and privileges hitherto not enjoyed by them. The British established their consulate and first post office in Muḥammarah in 1890,¹ and subsequently, after the discovery of oil and the formation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the British declared their protection over Muḥammarah in 1909.² In 1899 the British signed a treaty with Sheikh Mubārak which established their influence over Kuwait and enhanced the privileged position of the Sheikh. The hands of the Turks were tied and eventually they had to recognize the situation in 1913.³ The Ottomans were bound under the circumstances to exert special caution in their dealing with Basrah so as not to provoke a British reaction in an area so vital to their interests. Furthermore, it is beyond doubt that Sayid Tālib was provided with political⁴ and financial⁵ support from Khaz'al, Sheikh of Muḥammarah, and Mubārak, Sheikh of Kuwait. In fact the British made their position implicitly clear when their gunboat 'Alert' arrived in Basrah on the 4th May 1913 just when the Turks were trying to put an end to the alarming rise of Tālib's prestige.⁶

The socio-economic structure of Basrah was another factor in deciding the distinct political role or tendency of Basrah (the Arab nationalist or perhaps the pro-British). The town was essentially a commercial port and the centre of the greatest palm garden in the world.⁷ Thus trade in general and date

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1. T. Wilson, The Persian Gulf, (Oxford 1928), p.266.
 2. Persian Gulf, Handbook prepared under the direction of the Historical Section of the F.O.; No.76, H.M.S.O. (London 1920), p.57
 3. Ibid, p.54
 4. F.O.882/13/MES/15/11, Memorandum 'The Arab Movement and its possible future', Autumn 1915.
 5. F.O.882/25/AB/17. History of Sayyid Talib and his family, dated 30th August 1916.
 6. Ireland, op. cit., pp.233-4.
 7. M.H. Jamīl, Sīāset al 'Irāq al Tijariya, (Cairo, 1949), p.51.

cultivation and export in particular were of major effect. Basrah's trade was characterized by three basic features: its yearly growth in volume; its mounting dependence on the British markets; and the increasing volume of date export. All those features were in evidence during the Ottoman period but assumed wider proportions during the British era.

Dates were the major item in Iraq's export. In 1912-1913 they represented 18 per cent, but during 1916-1920, dates formed some 51 per cent of the total Iraqi export.¹ In 1883, Basrah exported 11,603 tons of dates, of which 10,364 tons were assigned to the United Kingdom. In 1919-1920 date exports amounted to 152,000 tons, most of which were also shipped to Britain.² During 1918, Basrah's exports totalled 222 Lacs of Rupees, of which 140 Lacs were the value of dates alone. It is important to observe that 229,675 cwts. of dates were exported to the British empire, while only 3,261 cwts. were the share of other countries.³

Under such conditions it was not surprising that Basrah, under Turkish rule, 'took unquestioned lead in the Arab Movement'.⁴ However Basrah was to abandon its 'leadership', once it came under British rule. Basrah's 'land-owning and commercial classes ... feel that British rule alone will help them'.⁵ During the British era 'the merchants and people of Basrah itself have grown rich, their trade is prospering'.⁶ In political terms this meant that the 'Sherifian politics' ceased to be appealing⁷ and in what was reported by Percy Cox 'In Basrah ... I found no enthusiasm for the idea of a national government'.⁸

The political and social dominance of the wealthy families of Basrah was a special characteristic. The same was not evident in other parts of Iraq. This again could be attributed to the very nature of social relationship existing

1. M.S. Hassan, op. cit., p.118.

2. Ibid., pp.130-1, 176.

3. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports 1918, Basrah Customs Report for the year ending 31st December 1918.

4. S.H. Longrigg, Iraq ..., op. cit., p.45

5. C.O.696/2. Admin Report, Basrah 1919, p.25

6. F.O.371/5231/E.13471. No.12986, 26th October 1920.

7. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report, Basrah 1919, pp.25-6, 59.

8. F.O.371/5231/E.13471. No.12986, 26th October 1920.

in areas where dates trade was dominant. The large number of date cultivators, the difficulty in storing them and their decomposing nature were all factors in weakening the small producers' position vis-à-vis the wealthy traders and the landholders. The latter group's position was further enhanced by being the only available body who could provide the cultivators with the large capital needed in date production. Furthermore, the Iraqi merchants monopolized the world date market by supplying it with two-thirds to four-fifths of its total volume. Thus the economic supremacy of Basrah's merchants and landholders had reflected itself in a recognized political and social position which was, unlike other parts of Iraq, rarely challenged from below.

It was under such favourable historical conditions that the sort of leadership represented by Sayid Tālib was to emerge.¹ However the objective circumstances had helped the rise of Tālib to leadership, the man had put his own personality into such a leadership. Tālib came from the al Naqīb family of Basrah who claimed to be descendants of the great Moslem 'saint' Sayid Ahmed al Rifā'i (Sunni). In 1840, the al Naqīb family acquired great wealth when Sayid Rajab (Tālib's father) managed by bribery and other means to get various lands held by him as Mulhaka Waqf registered by the tabu Department as a private property of himself and his brother Ahmed'.² Hamdi Pāsha, an exceptionally honest Wali, caught wind of this transaction and began moving to prevent the fraud. He also tried to put an end to the gun-running trade which was conducted jointly by al Naqīb and Sheikh of Kuwait. In 1899 Tālib scored his first success by persuading Constantinople to dismiss Hamdi Pāsha from his job. In 1900, Tālib secured the support of Sheikh Khaza'i of Muḥammarah by ordering two of his men to murder Abd Allah Effendi Rāwanduzi, a Kurdish lawyer living in Basrah who informed the Government about the illegality of Khaza'i's ownership of certain date gardens in Basrah. 'Frightened by this demonstration, the

1. See: Haifa A. Al-Nakib, A Critical Study of Saiyyid Talib Pasha Al-Nakib In the Setting of His Times and Environment, On the Basis of Arabic and Foreign Documents (M. Phil Thesis, Leeds University, 1973).

2. F.O.882/25/A.B/17. 'History of Sayyid Talib and his family'.

Turkish authorities gave way and allowed the properties to be registered in Shaikh Khaza'l's name'.¹ In 1902 Tālib, assisted by the powerful support of the Wali and the two Sheikhs, was appointed Mutaṣarrif of Aḥsā' but was soon dismissed because of his 'administrative misconduct'.² An official report described Tālib as '... a regular bully, levying blackmail on all the rich, plundering anyone who refused to serve him by means of professional robbers (blackguards) whom he kept in his house'.³ On the other hand the generosity of Tālib towards the poor, his supporters and the politically victimized was 'proverbial'.

In 1909 Tālib started his active political career by joining the C.U.P. in Basrah, cherishing the hope of becoming its recognized leader. But the C.U.P. arrested Tālib's ambitions, and aimed at giving only an appearance of political power to the city Arabs, while reserving all the real power for the Walis. He was elected as a deputy. In Constantinople, after his disillusionment with the C.U.P. and his contact with a relatively mature Arab nationalist atmosphere, Tālib deserted the C.U.P. and joined the Moderate liberal party.⁴ In a rather daring manner, Tālib sent a message to Sharif Hussein of Mecca in early 1911 complaining about the national suppression inflicted on the Arabs by the Turks. He urged the Sharif to rise up and promised him full support.⁵ The letter was accompanied by a signed document on behalf of all (?)⁶ Arab deputies recognizing Hussein as the Amir of Mecca and proclaiming him as the sole religious Sultah (power) over all Arab countries.⁷

In July 1911, Tālib initiated the first Iraqi branch of the Freedom and Accord Party. A meeting was held at Tālib's house in Basrah at which around

1. Ibid. In fact the Turkish Wali recognized Khaza'l's 'rights' in 1910 under direct British intervention.
A.T. Wilson, South West Persia: A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914, (Oxford, 1941), pp.118-9

2. al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.39-40

3. F.O.882/25/A.B.17

4. Ibid.

5. Faīḍi, op. cit., pp.87-8

6. The document was not signed by 'all' Arab deputies. Two of the signatories, al Mu'ayyid and al 'Asali (deputies for Damascus) were hanged by the Turks in 1916.

7. Faīḍi, op. cit., p.88. A. Daḡhir, al Thawra al 'Arabiya, (Cairo 1916), p.78. Daḡhir claims that the document was sent in 1913.

100 of its notables attended with a great majority being members of the C.U.P. The discussion against the C.U.P. centred on two major points, its anti-Arab policies and its tendencies towards imposing a dictatorial order. The discussion was concluded by deciding to form the new party on an autonomous basis (not organically linked to the headquarters at Constantinople) and to send a collective resignation to the C.U.P. An administrative committee was elected with Tālib as its president and containing the most wealthy families of Basrah, al 'Abd al Wāhid, Bāsh 'Ayān, al Na'mah, al Šāna', al Mindīl, al Salmān. The declared aims of this Party were the equality of Arabs and Turks, the need for reforms in the Empire and a demand to end the oppressive policies. The aim of independence or even that of decentralization was never mentioned. In fact the official ceremony of opening the branch on the 6th August was formally attended by the Wali and other important officials. The Party published its daily al Dastur (the Constitution) which was edited by 'Abd al Wahāb al Ṭabṭabā'i and financed by Maḥmud 'Abd al Wahid (the former was a young lawyer and the latter a wealthy merchant and landholder).

At the beginning of 1912, Tālib, while visiting Egypt, met Lord Kitchener and then went up to Simla with letters of introduction from Mr. Crow, the British Consul at Basrah, and saw Lord Hardinge. It appears that these meetings gave Tālib the impression that the British were prepared to assist his plans.¹

In February 1913 Tālib stepped up his opposition to the Turks by forming the Basrah Reformist Society which was identical to the Decentralization Party of Cairo and the National Club of Baghdad.² The new society adopted³ a programme composed of 28 articles in which it explicitly recognized the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire over Iraq, but demanded that the Walis should be Iraqis and that the official language of the State should be Arabic.⁴ During the same year, Tālib collected an enormous number of signatures on a petition sent to

1. F.O.882/25/A.B.17

2. Faīdi, op. cit., p.130; al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.19, 40.

3. The new leadership of the Society remained the same as the Freedom and Accord Party.

4. F.O.192/2451 Despatch No.51, 28th August 1913. Cited by Zien, op. cit., p.104.

Constantinople demanding urgent reforms to satisfy Arab national aspirations. Furthermore he arranged a meeting with the two Sheikhs of Muḥammarah and Kuwait to discuss the possibility of a confederation comprising the two Sheikhdoms and Basrah.¹

The Turks reacted to such attempts by dispatching a certain Farīd Bey as military commandant to Basrah with the task of stemming Ṭālib's increasing power. They took the further precaution of transferring the senior Arab officers (Rashid Kogha, Yāsīn al Hāshimi and 'Abd al Laṭīf al Fallāḥi) to positions outside Iraqi territory. It appears that Farīd Bey was planning the assassination or arrest of Ṭālib with the aid of 'Ajami of Muntafiq, whose tribesmen had started to penetrate Basrah in large numbers. Ṭālib's position became exceedingly precarious but he was not to be intimidated. By choosing offence as the best means of defence, Ṭālib's adherents, on June 19th, assassinated the Commandant and mortally wounded the Mutaṣarrif of Muntafiq, who was accompanying Farīd Bey.

After this assassination, Ṭālib seemed to have reached the zenith of his power. The Turks were left with no option but to recognize Ṭālib's position and to satisfy his ambitions in the hope of containing his extreme demands. Ṭālib, on the other hand, being more interested in his personal power than his declared programme of reforms, was to welcome the Turkish endeavour to endorse his privileged position. Thus in January 1914 after a period of negotiations with the Turks, Ṭālib issued a manifesto declaring that he and the Government 'had agreed to co-ordinate their efforts as if they were one soul and one body', that all differences were removed between them and that he would in future do all that lay in his power to promote Ottoman unity.² In May 1914 Talat (Minister of Interior) informed the British Ambassador that Ṭālib was to be made Wali of Basrah.³

1. M.'A.Q. al Najār, Al Tārīkh al Siyāsī li Imaret 'Arabistān, (Cairo, 1970), pp.140-5.

2. Amin Sa'id, al Thawra al 'Arabiya al Kubra, (Cairo, 1935), Vol.1, p.24.

3. F.O.882/25/A.B.17

It is outside the scope of this research to give a detailed evaluation of the historical significance of Tālib's struggle. However, it should be pointed out that the man was motivated more by burning ambition than idealistic vision. His real aim was not an independent Iraq or Arab unity so much as the formation of a confederation or alliance of semi-independent Arab rulers and Amirs consisting of the Shaikhs of Muḥammarah and Kuwait, Sayid Talib as Amir of Basrah, Ibn Saud, Ibn Rashid, the Sharif of Mecca, Imam Yahya and Sayid Idris. There was to be no democracy about the affair at all. Each ruler was to be autocratic in his own sphere, but matters of common interest and presumably foreign affairs of the Confederation would be settled by the autocratic rulers in council.¹

In a way Tālib was a separatist striving for regional power. Nevertheless, in attempting to do so, he had objectively rendered a great service to the emergence of Arab nationalism. By putting forward Arab national demands, by defying and discrediting the Turkish rule and by offering protection, financial and political support for the Arab nationalists, he had paved the way for the rise of the Arab national movement. However, since Tālib was excessively individualistic and self-centred, he had transformed this movement into a personal adventure, not a mature political trend. Thus when the War broke out, the Arab nationalists were taken by surprise and were unable either to capture the opportunity or to provide a programme for political action or demands.

The 'separationist' tendency of Tālib was by no means restricted to or invented by him. It was, virtually, an inclination prevailing among the dominant class of merchants and landholders whose very economic interests made them pro-British and even separationists. It is interesting to observe that in mid-1921, when an Iraqi provisional government had been established and it was clear that the British were preparing Iraq to become an 'independent' and united political entity, Basrah's influential families were very apprehensive. A petition signed by over 4,500 names was presented by an 'influential group of merchants and landowners' to the British Authorities demanding that 'Basrah should constitute a

1. F.O.882/13/MIS/15/11. 'The Arab Movement and its possible future'. Also, Hans Kohn, A History of Nationalism in the East, (London 1929), p.279

special political entity' and preserve its special links with the British, although acknowledging one king for all of Iraq.¹ A counter-petition signed by the Arab nationalists and demanding complete unity with the rest of Iraq was able to gather only 1,000 signatures.² On the 13th April 1921, Sir Percy Cox telegraphed the Foreign Office informing them of such demands which were presented to him by Ahmed Şana' Pasha (a wealthy merchant, supporter of Tālib and then Minister of Commerce).³ It was thanks to Sir Percy Cox's opposition that such an attempt was to die in its cradle. In fact, Tālib himself openly suggested to Captain Clayton that 'it might be necessary to separate Basrah from Baghdad and Mosul'.⁴

The Decline of Arab Nationalist Activities inside Iraq 1914-1918

When the War broke out, Arab nationalists were caught by surprise. They were to face a choice of either supporting the Entente or siding with the Porte. The Hashimites decided to back Britain on certain conditions. Another group of Arab nationalists, of Islamic reformist tendencies, relatively small but influential, apprehended the peril, connected with an Anglo-French occupation, and decided to back Turkey.⁵

1. F.O.371/6352/9842
2. Ibid.
3. F.O.371/6350/4953
4. Sir A.T. Wilson Papers, British Museum, Serial No.52457, Vol.III. Memorandum from Capt. I.N. Clayton, dated 22nd August 1920 to A.T. Wilson on an interview with Tālib Pasha. Clayton went on to explain Tālib's attitude, 'This may be intended merely to show his loyalty to us being prepared to go to any lengths to remain with us, or it may be prompted by some uncertainty as to his influence in the two northern Vilayets, and a desire to secure for himself at least Basrah'.
5. For instance, Shakīb Aarsalān (1869-1946). A writer and active politician. Friend of 'Abduh and Riḍā. Believed in a combination of Arab nationalism and Islamism. He argued that Arab independence was his life-long dream but the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire would bring about the subjugation of the Arabs by France and Britain. See his Limadha Ta'kher al Muslimun wa Taqadam Ghīyrahum, (Cairo, 3rd ed. 1939), pp.78-95. Also, Sirrah Dhāttiyah, (Beirut, 1969), pp.69-70, 110-111. Also Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī (d.1953) Writer, historian and Islamic reformer. Defended the Arabs against the Turks and demanded their independence. During the war sided with the Turks and his daily al Sharaq was to publish the secret text of the Sykes-Picot agreement, (Damascus, 20th November 1917). See his Mudhekerāt, vol.1, (Damascus, 1948), pp.117 and after; also J.D. al Alusī, Muḥammad Kurd Ali, (Baghdad, 1966), pp.13, 41, 52, 56-9, 92-4

However, the majority of Arab nationalists were confused and unable to assume a blunt attitude. In short: for Arab nationalists to eliminate this alternative or the other was an open question, the outcome of which could have been decided by the 'persuasive' ability of either side (Turkish or British).

The general reaction of the Iraqi public towards the British invasion, in its early days, was one of apprehension and resentment. Jihād was called by Moslem 'Ulemā', Arab officials deserted their posts and retreated with the regressing Turks, and Arab officers maintained their loyalty to their Turkish Seniors. Nevertheless, before two years had elapsed, cracks were to appear in the Turco-Arab bloc. The defeats at the front, the Turks' chauvinist policy, the spread of famine and anti-War feelings, the hanging of Arab nationalists in Syria, the Hijaz uprising, the Najaf and Karbalā' risings and the massacre of Hillah were all elements in dispelling the illusions of Turco-Arab solidarity and factors which encouraged the nationalists to approach the British.¹

The British responses to Arab nationalists' attempts were different. In Hijaz and Syria, British policy, after 1916, was friendly and encouraging.² In contrast to that, the British, in Iraq, ignored any aid which might have been rendered to them by the Iraqi nationalists. In Lawrence's words:

'Unfortunately Britain was bursting then with confidence in an easy and early victory: the smashing of Turkey was called a promenade. So the Indian Government was adverse to any pledges to the Arab nationalists ...'.³

Such a different British attitude was another factor in deepening the division in the Arab nationalist movement. Those nationalists who were in Syria and Hijaz were bound to assume a line favourable to Britain. Those in Iraq were suspicious of Britain's intentions. The British attitude in Iraq was, furthermore, responsible for the decline of the nationalist movement during 1914-1918.

1. Brig-General F.J. Moberley, The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918, (London, 1923-1926), Vol.1, p.133.

2. E. Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956, (London, 1965), p.27. Her quotation of Sykes' Papers, Sledmore No.1, Kitchener's letter to Hussein, November 1914.

3. T.E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, (Middlesex, 1963), p.58

The qualities of Sayid Tālib made him the candidate par excellence for the leadership of an Arab pro-British uprising. In October 1914, Tālib made advances to the British, through the Sheikh of Muḥammarah, and he offered in return for recognition as local chief, to initiate an Arab revolt against the Turks in Basrah.¹ The British considered Tālib's conditions as an 'exaggerated demand',² and on the 24th October 1914 the Government of India instructed its Political Resident in the Persian Gulf (then Sir Percy Cox) to 'advise Tālib that in case of war flaring up between Britain and Turkey, he Tālib should remain in Basrah and co-ordinate action with Ibn Sa'ud and the Sheikhs of Kuwait and Muḥammarah in safeguarding British interests in Basrah.'³ In return for this, the telegram went on, the British will grant him the following privileges:

1. That his date gardens should be immune from taxation.
2. That we would protect him against reprisals by the Turks.
3. That we would maintain all hereditary privileges of himself and the Naqib his father.⁴

Whatever Tālib's conditions were for his services to the British, it is evident that even his minimum demands were rejected by the Government of India which, in its reply, totally ignored his political requests. However, Tālib, being too ambitious to be tempted by the British lack of 'generosity', alarmed by the persistent pressing of Anwar's 'invitations' to Constantinople and being confused as to the outcome of the hostilities, decided to solve his burning dilemma by opting out of it altogether. Thus he left for Kuwait and the British victoriously entered Basrah. Tālib wrote to Cox (then Chief Political Officer in the Indian Expeditionary Force) offering his surrender and requesting his own exile to India. On the 19th January 1915, Tālib left Basrah for Bombay.

The early British declarations to the Iraqis, in contrast to General

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1. Cmd.1061, Review of the Civil Administration ..., op. cit., p.2. There is an exaggerated version of Tālib's conditions in Faīdi's book, op. cit., pp.188-190, in which it is claimed that Tālib demanded the non-occupation of Basrah by British troops and the acceptance of Iraq as an independent State. H. Al-Nakib, op. cit., pp.69-70, accepts Faīdi's version.
 2. F.O.882/25/17, August 30, 1916
 3. F.O.371/2144/75511, Telegram from S. of I.G. in the Foreign and Political Department, Simla.
 4. Ibid. Also, Cmd.1061, op. cit., p.2.

Maude's proclamation to the Baghdadis, which was given in different historical conditions (19th March 1917), had completely avoided making any political promises or giving any indications as to their future political destiny. The early declarations did not go beyond generalities of the following sort:

'.... The British Government has no quarrel with the Arab inhabitants on the river bank; and so long as they show themselves friendly, and do not harbour Turkish troops or go about armed they have nothing to fear and neither they nor their property will be molested'.¹

or
'In conclusion you are at full liberty to pursue your vocations as normal and your business as before'.²

However, the Viceroy of India was more particular in his speech given to the British Community at Basrah, in which he stated:

'... and in the settlement that must come after this great war, you may rest assured that steps will be taken to protect you and your interests'.³

However, the victorious march did not go on unchecked. The winter of 1915-16 witnessed two grim military setbacks for British troops. British Divisions, during the last week of December 1915 and the first fortnight of the new year, had to evacuate Gallipoli (Galibolu) Peninsula (which dominated the Dardanelles) and dribbled into Egypt. Such an evacuation was to General Maxwell (Commander of British Forces in Egypt) a renewal of the threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal. On the Iraqi front, the British troops, after a rash advance to Ctesiphon (Salman Pak) met with harsh Turkish resistance which obliged them to retreat to Kut and get entrenched in it. That was the start of the Kut muddle in which the British were faced with an iron-like military siege by Khalil Pasha and his troops. From December to April all British endeavours to break the siege failed. Consequently General Townshend's resistance faded away, and on the 29th April 1916 he unconditionally surrendered himself and his 13,309 men.⁴

1. F.O.371/5153/3540, British Proclamations in Iraq, No.4, Signed by P. Cox, Resident, Persian Gulf, dated 5th November 1914.

2. Ibid. No.5. Signed by P. Cox, dated 22nd November 1914.

3. Ibid. No.6. Speech of H.E. the Viceroy of India, dated 6th February 1915.

4. On the Kut siege, see the works of A.J. Barker, C.H. Barber, E. Candler, W. Robertson, C.V.E. Townshend, listed in the bibliography.

Britain was no longer 'bursting with confidence'.¹ The direction of the War at that time was justifying a more liberal and convincing approach toward the Arabs. McMahon, after a prolonged discussion, concluded his correspondence with Hussein, on the 30th January 1916, committing Britain to serious 'concessions' to meet Arab demands. The War Office sent Lawrence to Basrah, in March 1916, on what was described as '... a mission that must rank as one of the strangest in British military history';² that is, to offer an amount of one million Pounds (it was raised to 2 millions) as a bribe to Khalil Pasha, Lawrence was also to investigate in Basrah the potentialities of an Arab movement.³ The Iraqi nationalists were ready for such an approach. They were outraged at the mass hangings at Beirut and Damascus and the atrocities at Hillah, and were much encouraged by the successful uprisings of Najaf and Karbalā'. In short, and according to Lawrence, 'the conditions were ideal for an Arab Movement',⁴

In fact, a very important meeting, comprising the notables of the town, was held in the Naqīb's house at Baghdad, in late 1915, to discuss the situation. A significant resolution was adopted. 'Abd al Laṭīf Thuniyān proposed to send a message of support to the British, offering them help. All those attending⁵ agreed to such a proposal, including Yusif al Suwaīdi. Paradoxically, the sole dissenting voice was that of 'Abd al Raḥman al Naqīb (al Kaylāni), who argued that he had served the Turks too long to turn against them.⁶ Furthermore, it had been suggested that al Naqīb was suspected of having given information of the meeting to the Ottoman Authorities.⁷

1. David Lloyd George, War Memoires, 6 Vols. (London 1933-1936), Vol.1, p.529. By the end of 1916 the War position was so alarming that Sir William Robertson (Field-Marshal, Chief of Imperial General Staff, 1915-1919) reported to Lloyd George that 'At present time we are practically committing suicide'. Ibid., Vol.II, p.1037.

2. P. Knightly and C. Simpson, The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia, (London, 1969), p.45.

3. Ibid., pp.45-9.

4. T.E. Lawrence, op. cit., p.59.

5. Musa Kādem al Bājahji, Jamīl Zāda 'Abd al Raḥman, Yusif Suwaīdi, Yusif Bājahji, 'Abd al Raḥman al Naqīb, 'Abd al Laṭīf Thuniyān, Rashīd al Hāshimī.

6. F.O.371/2771/125694; also F.O. 371/4150/5394; also F.O.371/126993/45315

7. F.O.371/126993/45315. Such a 'suggestion' is not evident. However, shortly after the meeting, the Turks attempted to arrest Thuniyan and al Hāshimī but they escaped. Suwaīdi was arrested, tried and sentenced to death, but on the intervention of Muḥammad Fāḍīl Pasha al Daghīstānī, Suwaīdi's life was saved, but he was exiled to Anatólia.

However, Lawrence's first inglorious task failed, due to the integrity of Khalil Pasha. His second charge misfired because his efforts were let down by the 'ignorance'¹ of the British Officials in Iraq who foiled his authorized plans, 'the India Government was adverse to any pledge to the Arab nationalists'.²

According to Faiḍi, it seems that Lawrence, during his stay in Basrah, met him twice on the 7th April 1916, to discuss the conditions of the Arab movement in Iraq.³ Lawrence's argument was based on the assumption that if the Iraqi Arabs rebelled against the Turks, Britain would guarantee them freedom and independence. He argued that neither the British Government nor the British public had any imperialistic designs toward Iraq. Lawrence, so claims Faiḍi, offered him all available assistance and resources if he would accept the leadership of the proposed insurrection. Faiḍi confided to Lawrence that if he was to accept the leadership, a certain social background was essential which he, he rather humbly confessed, did not possess. Faiḍi's other negative motive was, so he asserts, his profound suspicion of Britain's secret ambitions, coupled with his affirmed belief that no alliance should be concluded with the British at the expense of the Turks, no matter how deep the conflict between Arab national aspiration and Turkish short-sighted oppression.⁴

Had the British been genuinely serious about inflaming an Arab rising then it seems that the most probable champion for such an insurrection would have been Sayid Ṭālib, rather than 'jackals' like Faiḍi or Ahmed Pasha al Ṣān'a. It appears that Ṭālib's exile and his burning ambitions had broken his political pride. On the 15th August 1916, Ṭālib raised a rather humiliating petition to Lord Chelmsford (Viceroy of India) offering his services. He apologized for his unhelpful attitude during the early days of the War, and attributed his

1. Knighty and Simpson, op. cit., p.50; also Lawrence, op. cit., pp.58-60.

2. Lawrence, op. cit., pp.58-60.

3. S. Faiḍi, op. cit., pp.206-266.

4. Lawrence's curiosity was mainly directed toward al 'Ahd and men like Yāsīn al Hāshimī, Azīz 'Alī and Rashīd Riḍā (the most reluctant Arab nationalists to cooperate with the British).

decision to respect for the treaty concluded between the Turks and himself. However, this treaty had been terminated by the Turks who charged him with high treason (al Muqattam Newspaper, Cairo, 12.7.1916, p.5, para.3). Tālib concluded his letter by saying:

'I shall most willingly place myself at the disposal of the British Government and render it all assistance I can ... Now I am not only a friend but an ally willing to place myself¹ and my resources for any service in the cause of Britain'.

Simla telegraphed Basrah informing them of Tālib's offer.² The authorities in Basrah were, apparently, not interested and the application was transferred to Cairo.³ The High Commissioner in Egypt replied to Simla 'Services of Sayid Talib cannot it is regretted be usefully employed'.⁴

Furthermore, in early 1917, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, impressed by Arab military successes near the Egyptian front, telegraphed General Maude (Lieut-General, Commander of British force in Mesopotamia from August 1916 to 11th March 1918) suggesting the deployment of the Arab military effort to the Euphrates lines to pressurise the Turks.⁵ Maude opposed such a Proposal, and argued that if the Arabs were allowed to be armed one day 'they were quite likely to take up arms against us the next'.⁶ He was clearly convinced that the Arabs, if armed 'will always represent potential dangers'.⁷

All these successive attitudes were neither accidental nor the product of mere 'ignorance', but, by and large, a part of policy carried out by the Indian authorities who had arranged the campaign militarily and politically. However, it is rather important to point out that such a scheme was not identical with intended British policy.⁸ It is sufficient to mention the harsh over-

1. F.O.371/2783/220355 dated 15th August 1916.

2. Ibid., same file; from S. to the G. of I. in the F. & P. Dept. Simla to the P.R. in the P.G. Basrah. Dated 24th August 1916.

3. Ibid., Also, Faīdi, op. cit., p.217. Lawrence told Faīdi that the Authorities prefer Sayid Tālib not to return.

4. F.O.371/2783/220355, dated 11th September 1916.

5. F.J. Moberley, op. cit., Vol.IV, p.21.

6. Ibid., p.10

7. Ibid., p.11.

8. It was only on the 18th July 1916 that the W.O. assumed complete control of the Mesopotamia Campaign. D. Lloyd George, War ..., op. cit., Vol.II, p.806

all account of Britain's Prime Minister toward the conduct of the Mesopotamian campaign. Lloyd George wrote:

'The fact revealed by this Commission's report¹ casts a baleful light upon the mismanagement, stupidity, criminal neglect and amazing incompetence of the military authorities who were responsible for the organization of the expedition'.²

Such a British attitude in Iraq³ was to participate in the suppression of the nationalist movement.⁴ The fledgling Iraqi nationalist movement was seriously weakened by several blows during the period 1914-1918. The Turks, in their turn, were by no means confident of the Iraqi Arabs.⁵ They embarked on a series of repressive political measures directed against the active Iraqi nationalists.⁶ Any movement, especially in its early stages, had a special need for leadership; with the exile of Tālib and al Suwaīdi and the fragmentation of young nationalists, such a leadership was virtually eliminated. Furthermore, the war which had engulfed Iraq with uncertainty, agony, martial law and dual repression, was another factor behind the absence of a unified nationalist programme or action inside Iraq during the years 1914-1918.

Such a situation nourished a rather inaccurate impression among British administrators. They believed that the Iraqis were satisfied with British rule, and that all the disturbances which occurred afterwards were the responsibility of the English Press, the Anglo-French declaration, Wilson's fourteen points.⁷ Such an account, although not altogether unjustified, tends to ignore

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1. See Cmd.8610, 'Report of the Commission appointed by Act of Parliament to enquire into the operations of War in Mesopotamia, together with a separate report by Commander J. Wedgwood, DSO, MP, and Appendices. (H.M.S.O. 1917).
 2. David Lloyd George, War Memoires, op. cit., Vol.II, p.808.
 3. P. Graves, The Life of Sir Percy Cox, (London, 1941), p.193.
 4. The deportation of Tālib and Nuri al Sa'īd, the suppression of the Press and the news of the Hijaz movement and the decline to allow Iraqi officers to stay in Iraq 1914-1918 or to return to Iraq 1918-1920.
 5. Moberley, op. cit., Vol.I, Appendix VI, Summary of a pamphlet by the Ottoman Staff Bimbashi; Muḥammad Amin, The Turco-British Campaign in Mesopotamia and Our Mistakes, pp.352-355.
 6. For instance the following Iraqi nationalists were under orders for arrest: al Uzri, al Dujiyli, Shukir, Thuniyān, al Bājahji, al 'Omar, al Ṭabaqjali, al A'raji, Ṣiliwh, al Karmali and al Hāshimi. Some of them escaped to Basrah and others were actually arrested.
 7. B. Thomas, op. cit., p.68.

the above-mentioned factors. It also ignores the fact that British Administration did not extend into the Shi'ah towns (Karbala' and Najaf) and the areas of the Middle Euphrates, until after 1918. Furthermore, it underestimates the amount of 'national' resentment which the Iraqis had shown towards alien rule (e.g. the Jihād movement 1914-1916, the mass desertion of Iraqi administrators, the Najaf disturbances, 1919, which were anti-British activities, the Najaf, Karbala' and Hillah uprisings of 1916, which were anti-Turk activities). It also turns a blind eye to the activities of the nationalist Iraqi officers abroad (Hijaz and Syria).

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SHI'AH IN IRAQ

Once the writer became acquainted with the recent work of Dr. Nafeesi,¹ this part could be cut short. However, the important role played by Iraqi Shi'ah both Mujtahids and intellectuals raises at least two questions. The intensive Shi'i involvement in the Iraqi independence movement and the unparallel Shi'i-Sunni unity of 1919-1921 demand an explanation. In this chapter the writer will attempt to trace the historical roots which originated such a process. As to the actual involvement and unity they will be examined in due course.²

(a) The Political essence of the Shi'i faith and tradition: Apart from certain religious rituals and beliefs, the basic doctrine in Shi'i thought is the belief in the Imamate. It is around this doctrine that the dividing line centres between the Shi'ah and other Moslem sects.³ The Shi'ah are of the opinion that the Imamate have been a religious necessity and should have been confined to 'Ali and his sons from Fāṭima.

This very doctrine reveals the political essence of the Shi'i faith. In the background of the Shi'i mentality the barrier between politics and religion does not exist. Hourani wrote:

'... Shi'ism ... began as a political movement in the seventh and eighth centuries ... The Shiites believe that only Mohammed and his successors, the Imam, had the infallible power of interpreting the word of God aright and guiding the community; obedience to the Imam was the root of virtue ...'.⁴

It was an organic part of their faith to refuse and resist any Sulṭān Jā'r (despot ruler). Most of the Caliphs were considered as usurpers. This inflicted upon the Shi'ah a ceaseless repression and persecution. By virtue of that their political awareness was to be sharpened and their ranks were more

1. A.F. Nafeesi, The Role of the Shi'ah in the Political Development of Modern Iraq (1914-1921), Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge University, 1972).

2. Infra, pp. 315-97.

3. M.H.K. al Ghiṭā', Aṣl al Shi'ah wa Auṣwliha, 9th ed., (Beirut, u.d.), pp. 107-113.

4. A. Hourani, 'Arabic Culture', The Atlantic Monthly, October, 1956, p.126

solid and united. The Shi'i faith was also to assume a militant, perhaps radical, character. And by virtue of that they were to represent the grievances and hopes of the underprivileged Moslems.¹ In short, they represented a permanent and a professional opposition to the ruling Moslems. On the other hand the Shi'ah developed the concept of Taqiya (religious dissimulation) which allowed them to dispensate from the requirements of religion under compulsion or threat of injury.²

Within the framework of such a faith, history, and tradition, the evasion of politics was an improbability. Furthermore there were other factors which decided the profound and effective involvement of the Shi'i mujtahid in politics namely, al Ijtihād and his financial and status dependence on the public will.

A good Moslem is supposed to adhere to the teachings of the Qurān and the Sunnah. If these fail him, then he is to follow Ijma' and Ijtihād.³ With the lapse of time and growing complications of life, the importance of al Ijtihād increased with the need for solutions to the new problems facing Moslems in a changing world. For a variety of reasons, the Sunni 'ulemā' decided to stop al Ijtihād. The Shi'ah continued to depend on it as their major religious instructor.

The outcome was to enhance the position of the mujtahids by allowing them to continue ruling the conduct of their followers: It was argued that:

'In Shi'ite Islam there are still absolute Mujtahids. This is because they are regarded as the spokesmen of the Hidden Imam.'⁴

1. M.J. Maghniya, Al Shi'ah wa al Hākīmūn, (Beirut, 1961), p.21.

2. Al Nafeesi, op. cit., p.35

3. Al Ijma', is the consensus of the Moslem 'ulemā', in a certain era, on a unified rule hukm of a religious or legal case Qadiya. Al Ijtihād is the interpretation of the 'ulemā' of a certain religious order in the Qurān and its implication on a case unmentioned in the Qurān or al Sunnah. The four forms of Ijtihād were, according to their religious power: al Qiyās al Istihṣān, al Istislāh and al Istishāh.

4. In time, the Shi'ah were divided into several schools or sects. The Iraqi Shi'ah belonged to al Ja'feriya or al Ithna 'Ashiriya. They believe in the 12 Imams, the descendant of 'Alī, the last of those Imams was supposed to have gone underground, in fear of the Abbāsīd Caliph, and has not yet appeared. So there is no other Imam after him and with the awaited Mahdi (the Hidden Imam), the Shi'ah believe that they will acquire political power and a promised era of justice and freedom will emerge too.

'This position is thus quite different from that of the 'ulema' among Sunnites'.¹

This very fact gave the Shi'i Mujtahids a very influential position.

For instance, tobacco and smoking were not mentioned in the Qurān. Thus the Shi'ah were not prohibited from smoking. In 1890, Nāṣir al Dīn, Shah of Persia, gave the tobacco monopoly to a British company. This concession raised a great protest in Persia and the 'ulemā' started to intervene. E.G. Browne described the development of the problem:

'At the beginning of December 1891, a letter arrived from the mujtahid of Samarra, Hajji Mirza Hasan of Shiraz, enjoining on the people the complete abandonment of tobacco until the concession should be repealed ... Suddenly, with perfect accord ... all the tobacco merchants have closed their shops, all the qalya'ns (water pipes) have been put aside, and no one smokes any longer; neither in the city or in the Shah's entourage, or even in the women's apartments. What discipline, what obedience, when it is a question of submission to the councils or rather the orders of any influential mulla or of a mujtahid of some celebrity'.²

Similar fetwas were to prove of vital importance to the rise of the Iraqi independence movement.

Another factor contributed to the influential position of the Shi'ah mujtahid, namely, the profound interaction between him and his followers. An interaction which manifested itself in terms of deciding the mujtahid's religious position and finance.

The importance of a Shi'i mujtahid and his promotion was mainly decided by the size of his followers and derived from the extent of his fame. To become a mujtahid one had to stay at Najaf studying at the hands of a great mujtahid for any period up to 25 years. If he proved himself through his pious nature, solitude, behaviour and religious understanding then he was awarded the Ijāza fi al ijtihād or certificate in Ijtihād, which provided him with the capability of giving the Fetwa.³

1. The Encyclopaedia of Islam, (London, 1913), Vol.II, pp.248-9. Also Vol.IV, pp.350-358.

2. E.G. Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909, (Cambridge, 1910), p.51

3. Others who did not reach this high position mainly by failing the exam were called Mulla or Mu'min (believer), or Muttadaiyn (Opious man) or Mugalid (imitator). Those men were fit to receive charity and to settle minor Shara' cases, but not to decide Hukum. Some others became Wakil (agent) or Mu'tamdd (representative). Those represented the mujtahid and acted on their behalf. C.O.696/1. Administration Reports, Najaf and Shamiyah, 1918, p.105

To become a senior mujtahid of a recognised status, the mujtahid has to gather round himself learned men and to send them out to various parts of the world to preach his fame. His influence gathers in volume like a snowball, until, finally, he is recognised by universal acclamation as one of the great mujtahids.¹

The highest stratum in the Shi'ah religious hierarchy is the chief mujtahid. This position is again not gained by appointment or certificate (as the Sunnis) but rather by sheer popularity and prestige. It is worth mentioning here that some of the mujtahids have gained part of their prestige through involvement in politics by supporting the popular case.² Also by not opposing the people's habits or feelings even when their own convictions ran counter to those feelings.³

A study of the financial resources of the Shi'ah clergy and institutions will not fail to indicate how heavily they were dependent on popular donations rather than official contribution. The major official resource came from the Persian government who considered itself as the protector of the Shi'i faith. The Ottoman contribution was very humble indeed.⁴ The third official channel was from India through the Oudh Bequest.⁵

The bulk of the Shi'i finance came from popular donations represented in Zakāt, Haq Jiddi, Radd Maḍālem, Haq al Waṣiya, Nithur and countless numbers of gifts, charities and pilgrims.⁶ This indicates that Shi'i mujtahids were,

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., pp.67-68, 106-7

3. Dr. 'Ali al Wardi, Dirasa fi Ṭabī'at al Mujtama' al 'Irāqi, (Baghdad, 1965), p,230

4. Ibid., pp.129-30.

5. Infra, pp.104-5.

6. Zakāt is a religious duty to pay one-tenth of the profit to the 'ulemā' for its distribution to the poor. Haq Jiddi (right of my grandfather) formed one-fifth of the profit and paid to the Sayids (descendants of Muḥammad). One-third of any inheritance was to be paid to the mujtahids (Haq al Waṣiya). Those who were paid by the government were expected to pay a portion of that income to the mujtahids (Radd Maḍālem). This could be explained by the Shi'i belief that the government gained its money by illegal methods. Also it indicated that working for the government was religiously illegal (Ḥarrām). It was estimated that no less than 120,000 pilgrims have poured into Najaf and Karbalā' at every important occasion. T. Lyell, The Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia, (London, 1923), pp.43-55. Also al Wardi, op. cit., pp.229-30, 246-7, 252-3.

unlike their Sunni counterparts, largely dependent on the public.

Judging by this profound interaction between the mujtahids and the Shi'ah masses, it is reasonable then to see how difficult it was for the mujtahids to keep aloof from politics, especially when the political issue in question was of deep interest to the wider population. In such circumstances their interference in politics became almost inevitable. They had to face a mounting and persistent pressure to take sides over political issues and they were quite unable to resist such demands. Wingate the Political Officer of Najaf and Shāmiyah wrote:

'.... and the great Mujtahid, whose power is based on popularity, is compelled to acquiesce and to put his name to a pronouncement which may have serious effects'.¹

(b) The historical development of the Shi'i-Sunni relationship: Up to the very late 19th Century the Iraqi community was torn by perpetual strife between its major components. The conflict assumed an alarming turn when, in the early 16th Century, the Shah of Persia was converted to the Shi'i faith. Hence forward the religious strife was to bear more significance when the two sides began to identify themselves with a foreign power, namely Turkey and Persia.² It goes without saying that conditions of such a character prevented the advent of an Iraqi Arab awareness or indeed any consciousness related to national or homeland concepts. Nevertheless in 1920, Iraqi Sunnah and Shi'ah were to display an unprecedented and strong unity.

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1. C.O.696/ Admin. Reports, 1918, op. cit., p.66
 2. Salīm I forced the Sunni 'ulemā' of his era to supply him with a fetwa allowing the 'extermination' of the Shi'ah.⁽ⁱ⁾ It was claimed that upon his occupation of Iraq he had slaughtered some 40,000 Shi'i.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ In 1508, Ismā'il al Safawi of Persia occupied Iraq and killed a great number of Sunni notables and destroyed all sacred tombs of Abu Hanifa and al Kiyāni. He was received with a 'tremendous welcome' by the Shi'ah.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ In 1624, Shah 'Abbās repeated a similar procedure.^(iv) In 1638, Murād IV re-occupied Baghdad and poured his revenge upon some 50,000 Persian and Iraqi Shi'i.^(v)
 - (i) Ş. al Huş ri, op. cit., p.40
 - (ii) E. Creasy, op. cit., pp.131-2
 - (iii) M. Maghniyah, Duwal al Shi'ah fi al Tārīkh, (Beirut, n.d.), pp.127-9
 - (iv) 'A. al 'Azzawī, Tārīkh al 'Irāq biyn Ihtilālīn, Vol.4, (Baghdad, 1949), p.177
 - (v) E. Creasy, op. cit., p.256

Behind that there lay a historical process. Apart from the socio-economic development, there were some intellectual changes taking place and encouraging the growth of such a unity. This was generated by the rise of the constitutional movements in Turkey and Persia alike, the growing apprehension of the Western Christian penetration and the influence of the Islamic reformers' ideas.

It was in August 1906 that a constitution was proclaimed in Persia.¹ This provoked a prolonged struggle in Persia between the constitutionalists and their opposers which was reflected in Iraq itself. The constitutionalists were well aware that they stood little chance of success were they unable to obtain the influence of some leading mujtahids of their side. 'Finally they triumphed owing to the definite commitment of Akhund Khurassani to their party'.² In his fetwa, al Khurāssāni (the Chief Mujtahid) stated that to defy the constitution was to defy the regulations of Islam itself.³ He was supported in his fetwa by several other mujtahids of whom were Shīrāzi and al Isfahāni.⁴ In July 1909, the anti-constitution Shah was ousted⁵ and replaced by a more sympathetic one. The 'constitutionalist' 'Ulemā' of Najaf supported the move and held a great celebration.⁶ When the second Ottoman constitution was declared, al Khurāssāni, on behalf of the 'progressive' mujtahids sent a telegram to 'Abd al Ḥamid demanding the recognition of the constitution as a religious necessity.⁷ On both occasions al Yazdi declined to offer his support.⁸

It is worth noticing that here are four new events: the rise of Najaf 'to its full height as a storm-centre of political activities'; the emergence of the Shi'ah 'Ulemā' as a decisive and crucial instrument of political practice and agitation; the beginning of two distinct trends among the 'Ulemā' themselves,

1. E.G. Browne, op. cit., pp.98, 132

2. C.O.696/1. Admin. Report, 1918, p.67

3. M.'A. Kamāl al Dīn, Al Tatwīr al Fikrī fī al 'Irāq, (Baghdad, 1920), p.23.

4. Ibid., p.24

5. E.G. Browne, op. cit., pp.133-70

6. J. Maḥbubah, op. cit., p.24

7. M.'A. Kamāl al Dīn, op. cit., p.27

8. Infra, p.334.

that is the liberal or progressive in contrast to the conservative school; and fourthly, the involvement of the 'Ulemā' and their political Fetwas which created a radically new atmosphere in the country. The open debates and frank discussions in the mosques and schools at Najaf and elsewhere generated a common consciousness in Iraq. Gone were the days when absolute and despotic rule was identified with Islam and with this political awareness started actively to replace the political apathy.

Furthermore, the constitutionalist movement or al Mashruṭiya originated a wide controversy in Iraq. The debate was not confined to the narrow circles of the intelligentsia. A wider section of the population showed interest and was divided on the issue.¹ Iraqi Sunnah were, in their turn, to take sides and suffer a split in their ranks. The rise of al Mashruṭiyah tended to suppress the sectarian conflict by introducing a new dividing line. Iraqi constitutionalists, both Shi'i and Sunni, were to find a common cause to defend. This throws a light on the fact that by 1910 the newly formed political groups were to transcend the sectarian structure and to include, in their ranks, both Shi'ah and Sunnah alike.² In Najaf the conflict between supporters of Yazdi (anti-Constitution) and those of Khurāssāni was at its height. The Qāimāqam was then Nāji al Suwaīdi who was an Arab nationalist and Sunni.³ It was significant that he was to throw his lot to the constitutionalists' side and render them his official assistance.⁴

In December 1911, Khurāssāni died. He was succeeded by the 'conservative' al Yazdi as chief Mujtahid. Between 1912 to 1920 the prominent Mujtahids in Iraq were al Shīrāzi of Sāmarā' (later moved to Karbalā'), al Iṣfahāni of Najaf, al Ṣadr and al Khālīṣi of Kādimān.⁵

Sayid Yazdi was described in a British Administration report as being:

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1. 'A. al Wardi, Lamḥāt Ijtimā'iya min Tārīkh al 'Irāq al Hadīth, Vol.3, (Baghdad, 1972), pp., 115-27, 161-70.
 2. Supra, pp. 76-7
 3. Infra, p.150, footnote, 3.
 4. 'A. al Wardi, Lamḥāt ..., op. cit., p.119
 5. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports, Najaf and Shamiyah, 1918, p.105

'He is at heart pro-British and very anti-Turk.

Since the deposition of Muḥamad 'Alī Shah, when verbally, though not in writing, he expressed disapprobation of the constitutionalists, he has never taken any part in politics, and has even ceased entirely to correspond with the Persian Government. Any attempt to make him do this foredoomed to failure. He does not even answer requests for advice sent to him by the Persian Government, and undoubtedly, at heart is a hater of the constitutionalist, and a staunch royalist.

His remarks to Colonel Stokes were characteristic when, on the letter saying that he was in Persia at the time of the constitution, he replied "Yes, when Persia began to go back".¹

The other important mujtahid was Mirza Muḥammad Taqī al Shīrāzī of Samarrā'; at the time of al Yazdī he was his sole rival and enjoyed as many followers as al Yazdī, but his prestige was not equal to that of al Yazdī owing to the fact that the latter was a Sayid. But, however, al Yazdī would not give a decision against that of a man like al Shīrāzī.² Shīrāzī was an aged man, and, prior to 1918, he did not take an active part in politics. But he did not hesitate on several occasions to make his political stand very clear. He was considered 'progressive' and a strong supporter of the constitutionalist movement in Persia and Turkey. After 1918, encouraged by the nationalists and his son, he came openly into active politics and was a major factor in the rise of the anti-British movement, especially after becoming chief mujtahid. This will be left to the coming chapters.

The second most important mujtahid in Najaf and the fourth in the Shi'ah world was Sheikh al Sharī'a al Isfahānī. He took an active part in the Jihad declared against the British when they invaded Iraq, but came to good terms with them afterwards. A strong constitutionalist supporter, he had early contacts with the British through being one of the Oudh Bequest distributors.³ He became chief mujtahid just in the midst of the uprising and played an important role in these events.

Fear of Western penetration was another factor in narrowing the gap between the Iraqi Shi'ah and Sunnah. The first indication was shown by the elder Shīrāzī

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

and other Mujtahids¹ protest against the tobacco concession.¹ By that the Mujtahids were risking the, hitherto much needed, Persian Government's support. In late 1911, Khurāssāni called for a Jihād against the Russian invasion of Persia. In April 1912, his call was supported by al Khālīṣi, al Ṣadr and al Shīrāzi. Yazdi abstained.²

In late 1911, all Iraqi 'ulemā', including al Yazdi, proclaimed a Jihād against the Italian invasion of Libya. All over Iraq committees were formed for that purpose and the Shi'ah were among the most active.³ The Shi'i contribution to the Libyan Jihād was indicative that they were in fact advocating the defence of a Sunni land and the Ottoman integrity. On that occasion a Najafi Paper wrote 'whenever our enemies increase their oppression, we shall strengthen our unity'.⁴ However, the most significant chain of this process occurred in 1914, when the Shi'i Mujtahids declared Jihād and organized troops for the defence of Iraq against the British. By that they had disclosed their preference for a Sunni dominant Iraq rather than a British one.

The ideas of the Islamic reformers played an important role in this unification process. They advocated a non-sectarian Islam, the unity of Shi'ah and Sunnah and pointed out the perils involved in Western penetration of Islam. However, it was more than a general intellectual influence. Afghāni was in Basrah during the tobacco issue. He wrote a religious and an emotional letter to Shīrāzi urging his intervention. The letter contained a vigorous attack on the Persian Shah. It was widely published in Iraq and reported to have had a strong impact in Najaf.⁵

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1. See N.R. Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran: the Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892, (London, 1966).
 2. 'Al al Wardi, Lamḥāt ..., op. cit., pp.123-5.
 3. I. al Wā'ili, Al Shi'r al 'Irāqi wa Ḥarb Trablus, (Baghdad, 1964). Al Fetla tribal leader offered to join the fighting. Tālib led the Basrah committee. Ruṣāfi, Ridā and Bāqir al Shabībī, al Sharqi and al Hilli were most active.
 4. Al 'Ilem. Vol.2, No.7, 23rd November 1911. Najaf. (Shahrīntāni)
 5. M. al Amīn, Jamāl al Dīn al Afghāni, (Najaf, un.d.), p.25. The text of the letter in M.R. Ridā, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., pp.56-62

Afghani's animosity to the Persian Shah was to influence some Shi'i mujtahids to question their alliance with the Persian Government.¹ During his stay in Iraq (in 1891), Afghāni visited Najaf, Karbalā', Kādimān, Baghdad and Basrah. He established contacts, preached his ideas and influenced some prominent Iraqis of whom al Ḥabubi, al Shāhristāni and al Kādimi were the most important.² In Constantinople he formed a committee propogating Shi'i-Sunni unity.³ He wrote several letters to the Shi'i mujtahids, quoting examples from Islamic history and beliefs, urging their unity with the Sunnah for the defence of the Ottoman Empire. This, according to Afghāni, was the best method of defending Islam against Western intentions.⁴ Afghāni's efforts were to achieve certain positive results in both Persia⁵ and Iraq.⁶ It is interesting that Iraqi Shi'i fetwa against the British invasion (1914) was based on the principle of al Difā' 'an Ahl al Thughur.⁷ It was precisely the same principle which Afghāni as early as 1891 was advocating.

In 1906, 'Ali al Bazirkan, an educated young Shi'i propagated the idea of a school to teach the Shi'ah modern sciences and languages. He was accused of Kufr. In 1908, he gained the support of al Ḥabubi, the reformist mujtahid who embarked on a wide campaign to convince the Shi'ah. Eventually the community decided to finance the school and the Wali authorized a committee to open it in 1909. It is significant that Bāzirkān and Ḥabubi's argument was based on the necessity of modern science to the Shi'i youth and the importance of detaching loyalty from Persia and establishing an Iraqi Shi'i-Sunni unity.⁸

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1. P. Sykes, A History of Persia, (London, 1958), Vol.2, pp.398-9.
 2. 'A.M. al Qaṣāb, Dhikra al-Afghāni fi al 'Irāq, (Baghdad, 1945), p.85; also, H.'A. Maḥfoud, Irāqiyat al Kādimi, (Baghdad, 1960), p.76
 3. E. Browne, The Persian ..., op. cit., p.415
 4. M. al Makhzumi, op. cit., pp.34-6
 5. E. Browne, op. cit., p.107.
 6. 'A. al Wardi, Lamḥāt ..., op. cit., pp.304-6
 7. The Shi'i Imām Zeīn al 'Abdīn advocated this principle to defend the Islamic state against al Kufār.
 8. 'A. al Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.45-50

All those factors were to bridge a gap between Shi'ah and Sunnah and to allow the advent of a new solidarity. The 'progressive' elements of the two sects found in the Mashrutiya cause and in the reformed Islam a common vision. The subsequent Sunni disillusionment with the C.U.P. and the Shi'i frustration with the Shah tended to eradicate the previous identification with Persia and Turkey. Resentment of Western influence strengthened the emerging unity and had a role in deciding the future Shi'i-British relationship.

(c) The Shi'i-British relationship up to 1918: (i) The Oudh Bequest; the first direct and important contact between the Shi'ah Ulemā' and the British Authorities was established through the Oudh Bequest. The origins of this bequest went back to 1825.¹ Previous to 1910, the methods of Oudh Bequest distribution were as follows: it was divided equally between mujtahids of the two towns at the amount of Rs. 5,085 for each of them on a monthly basis. The British Resident at Baghdad had the free right to select the mujtahids in the two towns (Najaf and Karbalā') who got the money directly from him. The distribution of the money was completely left to the will of the mujtahids.² Usually a mujtahid recipient received money from the Bequest for life.²

In 1903 and at Karbalā', the following mujtahids were in receipt of the Bequest: Muḥammad Bāqir,³ Hāshim al Qazwīni, Ḥussein Māzandari, Ja'far Taḥṭābyi, 'Ali Yazdi, and Šibta Ḥussein. At Najaf they were: Muḥammad Baḥr al 'Ulum,⁴ 'Ali Nahāvandi, Muḥammad Ḥassan, 'Abd Allah Māzandāri, 'Abd al Ḥassan, Muḥammad Hindi and Kāḍim Khurānāni.⁵ In 1906, the following mujtahids were added to the Karbalā' distributors: Muḥammad al Kāshāni, 'Ali Tangabuni, Muḥammad Bāqir Behbehāni, Quḷli Bāqir, Ḥussein Qumi. And in Najaf the additional distributors

1. Lorimer, op. cit., p.1854

2. C.O.696/2. Admin Report Shamiyah, 1919. Note by the A.P.O. Agha Hamid Khan, p.32.

3. Sayid Bāqir was the original distributor at Karbalā', his monthly allowance was Rs. 1,500.

4. Sayid Baḥr al 'Ulum was the original distributor at Najaf, his allowance was Rs. 1,500 each month. Others were in receipt of Rs. 5,000.

5. Lorimer, op. cit., pp.1613-4.

were: Fath Allah Sharī'a, Abu Qāssim Ishqavari, Mulla 'Ali Khonsari, Abu Turāb and Sheikh Mehdi.¹

The British thought that this system was not working properly. It seems they had some doubts about the way the money was distributed.² So in 1910 the British Resident in Baghdad changed the system and imposed new methods. The main change from the previous rules was that:

'The Mujtahid Distributor is required to disburse half of the money received, through a committee composed of himself and his colleagues, and an equal number of members (Residency Members) representing the British Resident under the presidency of one of the latter'.³

In the mentioned note by Agha Ḥamid Khān, he gave the names of the Mujtahid Distributors in 1918:

'(i) Six Mujtahid Distributors ... their names as follows:

Shaikh al Shariat /al Isfahāni/
Hassan Sahib al Jawahir
Saiyid Ja'far Bahar al 'Ulam
Haji Muhamad Agha Hindi
Shaikh Mahdi Asadullah
Shaikh Mahdi Kashmiri'.⁴

By going to the 'Prominent Personalities in Najaf and Shamiyah',⁵ it was interesting to find that five of the above six were described as 'very pro-British'. What was more interesting and rather suprising was that all of those five men were described as 'of no influence'.

As much as the British had gained friends through this Bequest affair as much they created resentment, at least through envy and a notion of unjustified British bias in their process of selecting the Mujtahid Distributors.

(ii) The Jihād: The second factor which influenced the Shi'i-British relations before 1917 was the Jihād. When the British started their invasion of Iraq on 6th November 1914, the Turkish authorities unleashed a religious campaign to win the support of 'Ulemā' for the Ottoman cause. The war was presented to the 'Ulemā' as an Islamic war against the kāfir (infidel). They were requested to declare Fetwa for the Jihād (holy war) against the invaders.

1. Ibid., p.1616

2. T. Lyell, op. cit., p.46

3. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report Shamiyah 1919, p.32

4. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report, Shamiyah 1919, p.32

5. C.O.696/1. Admin. Report, Najaf and Shamiyah, 1918, pp.106-7

Those who declared the Jihād were Sayid Muḥammad Sa'īd al Ḥabubī, Sheikh 'Abd al Karīm al Jazāi'ri, Sayid 'Abd al Razzāq al Ḥallu, Sheikh Jawad Ṣāhib al Jawāhir and many others. Sheikh al Sharī'a al Iṣfahānī followed them in declaring the Jihād.¹ It is not very surprising to notice that al Yazdī was absent from the Jihād movement.²

The tribes were reluctant to respond to the Jihād call owing to the hatred which they always bore to the Turks.³ But al Ḥabubī, who was the most active in the Jihād movement, went to the Middle Euphrates and started persuading the tribal leaders.⁴ The Turks also made some friendly gestures by releasing some of al Far'un from prison and returning to them their confiscated land in the Miṣkhāb.⁵ Anyhow, the strength of the Fetwa and the consistent efforts of the Shi'i 'Ulemā', in particular that of al Ḥabubī, have borne their fruits and the troops of Jihād proceeded to Shu'ibah to assist the Turks. Some of the 'Ulemā' joined the troops and stayed with them at the time of the fighting. The main tribal leaders of the Jihād movement were:⁶

'Ajami al Sa'dun, Sayid Nur al Yāsiri, 'Abd al Wahid al Haji Sikar, Sayid 'Alwān al Sayid 'Abbās, Sayid Hādī Mukuṭer, Sayid Muḥsin abu Ṭabīkh, Sayid Hādī Zuwaīn, Mubdir al Far'un, Sha'lān Abu al Jun and Ghuthieth al Ḥarjān.

It is worth noticing here that all of those leaders were of the Middle Euphrates, which clearly indicates the weight of the Shi'ah 'Ulemā' Fetwas on them. Furthermore, all of them were to become the leaders of the 1920 uprising. On the other hand it is fair to say that their Jihād did not signify deep loyalty to the Turks; those were the people who gave so much trouble to the Turks before the Jihād and in fact they were very reluctant to fight for them if not for the influence of their clergy.⁷

1. A.Sh. al Yāsiri, op. cit., p.69

2. Maḥbubah, op. cit., p.246

3. A. Fir'on, op. cit., pp.36-38

4. Al Yāsiri, op. cit., p.72

5. Ibid., pp.69-70

6. Ibid., pp.72-75

7. Al Fir'on, op. cit., pp.36-38

The results of the Jihād movement were, militarily speaking, of no importance whatever, but its political significance is worth a quick look. It had shown once again the influential strength of the 'Ulemā' and their capacity to motivate the Iraqi tribes especially of the Mid-Euphrates. The Jihād had shown also the strength of the religious factor which gathered the Shi'ah with their Sunni Turkish opponents to defend the country against the "Christian" invaders.

The other political consequence of the Jihād was that in a way it had committed some of the 'Ulemā', at least morally, to an anti-British stand which, consequently, they had to carry on. Also it had poisoned the Mid-Euphrates tribes' relations with the British to a great extent. In a way, it could be said that the seeds of the 1920 uprising were planted by the Jihād movement of 1915.

Moreover, the Jihād movement revealed the strong impact which the Shi'i 'Ulemā' held over the tribesmen. The latter were in fact reluctant to side with their Turkish oppressor if it was not the Fetwa of their religious leaders. Sheikh Badr al Rumaīd (leader of Bani Mālek) told Ahmed Awraq (one of the Turkish Commanders) 'You are the traitors of Islam, and your treatment of the Arabs shows that ... If it was not for the Fetwa of our 'Ulemā', we would not be on your side'.¹

(iii) Situation in Najaf on the eve of British Occupation: The population of Najaf, apart from the 'Ulemā' and their train of students and dependents, was divided into two tribal factions, the Zughurt and the Shumurt.² The population of the town was about 40,000 and was divided into four quarters with a leader for each quarter. The quarters were al Burāq, al Mushraq, al Huwaish, and al Amarāh. The leaders of those quarters were Kādim Subbi, Hāji Sa'ad ibn Hāji Rādi, Sayid Mahdi ibn Sayid Salmān and Hāji 'Atiyah Abu Kulal respectively. Hāji Rādi was of the Shumurt and the rest were of the Zughurt.³ All of those leaders were of humble origins; Subbi was a coffee maker, Hāji Sa'ad was a butcher,⁴ Abu Kulal pursued before the war the career of a smuggler.⁵ Sayid Mahdi was the son of the recognised leader of the Zughurt.

1. Al Fir'on, op. cit., pp.40-1

2. J. Maḥbubah, op. cit., p.240

3. al Bāzerkān, op. cit., p.57

4. F.O.882/27, Arab Bureau Papers, p.115

5. Ibid. It should be noted that smuggling in their conditions was not a dishonourable career.

After the defeat of the Turks in Shu'ibah, the leaders of Najaf were not slow in recognising the weakness of the Turks and their impotence in sending any troops to Najaf if a rising should occur. The fourth leader, Abu Kulal, started to plan a takeover of the town and prepared for that by ending their previous strife and clashes. The Najafis had no love at all for their crude and ruthless Turkish qāimmaqām¹ and, consequently, they were in favour of ejecting the Ottoman administration.

The Turks made a disastrous mistake by sending a military force to Najaf entrusted with tracing the army deserters.² That was the spark for a popular rising. Hāji Sa'ad with his men (some of them army defectors) succeeded in entering the town and in keeping the Turks at bay for 24 hours, by which time help had come from outside and the whole town had risen and joined the insurgents. With 10,000 rifles against them and their food and water cut off, the Turks stood little chance and capitulated three days later. They were disarmed and allowed to depart to Kifl.³ It was also reported that al Yazdi 'has not actually declared a Jihād against the Turks, but is said to have given encouragement to the tribal rising'.⁴

The Turks were very reluctant to retaliate owing to the sacred status of Najaf. They simply relinquished all their influence and position in Najaf and accepted the situation. Thus Najaf 'enjoyed' complete local autonomy under the rule of the four leaders and was completely free from any outside influence or centralised state authority.⁵ This period of enjoyment (or suffering)⁶ came to an end in August 1917, when the first British Government agents were appointed.

A few months after the Najaf uprising, Karbalā', the second holy city in the Shi'i world, impressed and agitated by events in Najaf, revolted against the Turks

1. J. Maḥbuhah, op. cit., pp.246-247

2. Al Yāsiri, op. cit., p.86.

3. C.O.696/1, Admin. Report, op. cit., p.68; also al Yāsiri, p.86; also Fir'on, p.41; also Maḥbuhah, pp.246-247.

4. F.O.882/26/Arab Bulletin 41, dated February 6th 1917.

5. Ibid.

6. The British and Arab sources contradict each other very sharply on this point.

in June 1915. The Turks, handicapped by their military weakness and the sacredness of the town, did not use repressive violence, but tried to solve the problem peacefully. They gave concessions and agreed to reduce their power and influence in Karbalā'. But in May 1916 the Kamunah family led a new revolt to finish what had remained of the Turkish influence. Thus, Karbalā' was administered by the Kamunah family completely free from any authority of whatever Government. Karbalā' then had its period of self-rule until the British, in the middle of 1917, sent their agents to administer Karbalā'.¹

It was as early as June 1916 that some Shi'i notables had established contacts with the invading British force. A messenger brought Sir Percy Cox a circular letter signed by 200 principal men of Karbalā' and endorsed by the 'Ulemā'. The document protested against Turkish 'bombardment of the sacred shrines, the massacre of innocent people, and the violation of women by a so-called Moslem Government'.² The messenger urged the Chief Political Officer that if the British would send up some gunboats as far as Batlah (a place roughly midway between Nāṣiriyyah and Samāwah), Sheikh 'Ali Kamunah (the leader of Karbalā') would bring men down and escort the boats to Samāwah and Najaf. 'He says there are now in the Holy Cities 70,000 people all of one mind and ready to join the British against the Turks and assist them in the capture of Baghdad'.³

In early 1917, Ḥāji 'Aṭīyah abu Kulal (the leader of the Najaf rising) sent a letter to the British Authorities in Nāṣiriyyah informing them that the number of the tribal confederation gathering in revolt against the Turks amounted to 25,000. Ḥāji 'Aṭīyah was inviting the British 'to advance on the Euphrates, and join his tribal forces'.⁴ It is interesting that although the Military Authorities wished to exploit such opportunities,⁵ Sir Percy Cox declined to commit himself and was only prepared to send 'gifts of money'.⁶

1. Fir'on, op. cit., p.41, and al Yāsiri, op. cit., p.87

2. F.O.882/25/Arab Bulletin, No. 7, 30th June 1916

3. Ibid., Arab Bulletin, No.13, 1st August 1916

4. F.O.882/26/Arab Bulletin, No.41, February 1917

5. Ibid.

6. S. Longrigg, Iraq ..., op. cit., p.85

Nevertheless a delegation of Najaf notables and mujtahids sent the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad a telegram rendering their 'congratulations' for the victories of the Allies.¹ Next day they received Wilson's reply assuring them that Britain would 'fulfill its promises to its Arab allies'.²

Thus the Iraqi Shi'ah were, in contrast to many claims, far from assuming a unified attitude towards the British arrival. A group of Mujtahids was firmly opposed to the invasion and gave its support to the Turks. This group was composed of Ḥabubi (d.1915), "Shahristāni", Jazā'iri, Jawāhir and Bahr al 'Ulum. All of them were reformists, constitutionalists and remained hostile to the British as a matter of principle. They were to redisplay their animosity in 1918, during the Najaf disturbances, and again in 1920. Without underestimating their influence and impact it is important to observe that they did not represent the bulk of the Shi'i community. It was only after 1918, thanks to Wilson's Administration, that the majority of the Shi'ah were to turn anti-British. The Sayids of Shāmiyah and Mishkhāb assumed a similar stance due to the favourable Turkish treatment.

The local leaders of Najaf and Karbalā' were overtaken by their hostility to the Turks and offered their aid to the British.³ However this support did not involve a desire for the extension of British rule to their areas. In fact such a step was fiercely resented in 1917-1918.⁴ Such also was the attitude of al Khazā'il federation.⁵

It is interesting to find that the Shi'i Arab nationalists were, similar to their Sunni counterpart, in favour of a positive attitude towards the British, more especially after 1916. Ridā al Shabībī expressed the nationalists' bitterness of Turkish contempt of the Arabs in a famous poem.⁶ He and his brother

1. Al 'Arab, No.107, Baghdad, 7th October 1918, telegram dated 3rd October 1918.

2. Ibid., telegram dated 4th October 1918

3. Supra, pp. 109.

4. Infra, pp. 339-40.

5. F.O.882/26. Arab Bulletin, 38. December 1916. Communication dated 5th June 1916. Euphrates intelligence.

6. M.R. al Shabībī, Dīwān, (Cairo, 1940), pp.26-9

و حفظ توما سوانا الذي والصلى
من المهارم ثقل ليس يحنه

توم من العرب وخذ النخل حظه
عند المهارم تنسونا ويفد حنا

Baqir 'showed /themselves/ extremely friendly /after the Occupation/ and /were/ recommended by Capt. Marshal /A.P.O./ as correspondents for our vernacular paper Al Arab'.¹ However, in early 1919, he surprised the British by leading an 'aggressive' campaign against the Administration calling for the 'absolute' independence of Iraq.²

An attitude of 'wait and see' was dominant among the tribal leaders of the Mid-Euphrates. It is true that they joined the Jihād, but that was done half-heartedly, under their 'ulemā' pressure, and they seized the first opportunity to desert the Turks. From 1915 to 1918 they showed no outward sign of hostility. But after 1918, when Wilson imposed his administration measures upon their areas, they were swept into the anti-British drive. It was during the Jihād that some of their leaders had enhanced their political awareness and established contacts with the group of reformist Mujtahids. A factor which proved of importance in 1919-1920.

In 1914, the Iraqi Arab nationalist movement was still in its formative period. A series of socio-economic changes allowed the advent of such a movement. The ideas of Islamic reformists and Arab nationalists emanating from Syria and Egypt were influencing a rising elite. The constitutional struggle in both Persia and Turkey affected the population, linked the Shi'ah and Sunnah and sharpened the political awareness of the intelligentsia. Nevertheless the nationalist movement remained within narrow circles. Its relative maturity, growth, popularity and aggressiveness were to materialize during the period of British occupation, more especially after 1918. It will be suggested that the policies of the Civil Commissioner were, among other factors, behind such a growth.

1. F.O.371/5243/E.10272

2. Ibid.

P A R T T W O

THE ROLE OF MILITARY OFFICERS IN THE INDEPENDENCE
MOVEMENT 1912-1920

The period 1918 and 1920 witnessed a remarkable growth of the Iraqi independence movement both in its popularity and its political maturity. This was due to the general atmosphere of post-War conditions and to the existence of the British Administration in Iraq.

By Arab nationalists I mean those who cherished the idea of an Arab Administration in an 'independent' Iraq. However, in this widely assorted group, distinctions must be drawn between different trends and different organisations among those who held these aspirations.

In the first place, there was the nationalist movement working inside Iraq itself. This movement was represented by al 'Ahd and Haras al Istiqlāl and led by Suwaīdi, Ṣadr and abu Timman. However, because of the War, conditions of occupation and the policies of the Civil Commissioner, there was another movement which was active outside the boundaries of Iraq, but no less effective in Iraq's political development. This movement was that of the Iraqi Officers. They had deserted the Turkish Army, joined the Hijaz uprising or served Faisal during his short Arab rule over Syria. This is the movement with which I shall deal first.

Further distinctions must be drawn between different political trends interacting within both the movements to which I have referred. The 'independence' of Iraq was a common goal to which all nationalists were dedicated. But, the degree of this independence and the methods of gaining it were the subject of much dissension. The moderates envisaged an independent Iraq guided and protected by the British. Such an aim was to be achieved by British support, or at least that of the liberal section among British policymakers. The militants advocated a 'complete' or absolute independence untrammelled by any form of British influence or 'assistance'. They believed that political violence was the only means of compelling the British to accept their aims.

Both trends were in evidence among Iraqi nationalists outside and inside

Iraq. The first attitude was adopted by the Baghdadi 'Ahd, Tālīb Pasha, Faīdī Nuri and Ja'far. The other had the support of al Haras, Mosul's 'Ahd, Suwaidi, abu Timman and some tribal leaders. Among Iraqi Officers it was the platform of al Hāshimi, Shallāsh and even al Madfa'i and 'Ali Jawdat.

Although Nuri argued that 'in every breast' there was a determination that 'nothing short of a national administration of an independent character will be willingly accepted', and called for the 'immediate creation of a national civil administration', he qualified his statement by indicating that such an administration ought to be 'under the supervision of the Occupation'. Furthermore, Nuri stressed his belief in 'the spirit of comradeship with the British' and his anxiety 'to continue on the path of loyalty and collaboration with the British'. He went on to express his determination 'to put an end to all the motives that may tend to renew the connection with the Turks'.¹ Ja'far condemned as 'madness' any attempt to 'alienate English sympathy' by provoking violence.² On the other extreme, the leader of Mosul's 'Ahd was of the opinion that independence would never be achieved except by force of arms. He advocated an alliance with the Kemalists and the Bolsheviks.³ Both views were found in one and the same political organization. This diversity of views had far reaching implications and consequences, more especially when it was translated into political practice.

The conflict cannot be dissociated from a similar dispute concerning the political future of Iraq taking place among the British decision-makers. This dispute was between those who advocated direct British rule over Iraq and those who saw it in Britain's interest to grant Iraq some sort of independence headed by a 'friendly' Arab Government. This conflict took its rise from different approaches and emphases between the 'Indian School' and the 'Arab' school.⁴

1. F.O.371/5226/E.2719. Letter from Nuri al Sai'd to Major Young. 5th April 1920. See Appendix II.

2. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, *Newcastle*, letter dated 27th November 1920.

3. Letter dated 30th November 1919. From Mosul 'Ahd to 'General Centre'. Published in Ṣada al Ahrār, Mosul, 3rd April 1953.

4. B. Thomas, Alarms and Excursions in Arabia, (New York, 1931), pp.60-1; Lord Birdwood, Nuri As-Said, (London, 1959), pp.24-6.

In the course of time the original source of the dispute ceased to be of importance.¹ Furthermore, changing conditions altered or modified the views of most of the advocates of the 'Indian' vision. However, Wilson remained, to the end, a firm believer in direct rule.

The Civil Commissioner's most cherished hope was the idea of Iraq as the model of an efficiently administered British dependency or protectorate. He was firmly opposed to the idea of an Arab Administration, let alone Iraqi independence. He even opposed the appointment of Arab officials in his Administration because it 'would involve the rapid decay of authority, law and order'.² It was argued that he had an 'implacable hostility to anything Sherifian',³ and he 'outraged nationalist feeling, under-estimated the strength of it and wholly misunderstood it'.⁴ Wilson conceived of the nationalist activities as a mere external agitation emanating from 'our subsidised friends' in Damascus.⁵ Such views formed a complete contrast to the opinions held by Philby, who advocated 'complete independence',⁶ Young, Bell and Lawrence, who in varying degrees favoured co-operation with Iraqi nationalists, and even Hirtzel, who moved with the times and in 1919 warned Wilson that 'you are going to have an Arab state whether you like it or not'.⁷ It was thus logical for moderate nationalists and British Liberals to find eventually a common language and understanding, which influenced political events and largely determined the outcome.

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1. It appears that the genuine dispute between those two 'schools, was more related to the question of Britain's strategic interests in the M.E. The two sides differed on their interpretations of these interests more than on the relatively minor issue of Iraq's independence. The Indian Administration considered that the protection of India required the domination over Eastern and Southern Arabia, Aden, the Persian Gulf and Southern Iraq. The Arab Bureau emphasized the importance of the Suez Canal and therefore Egypt, Syria, the Red Sea and Hijaz. While the former school viewed b. Sa'ud as the major Arab ally and deeply resented the Hashimites, the latter view was inclined to consider the Hashimites as the most suitable family to lead Hijaz and Syria into a pro-British Arab revolt. R. Wingate, Not in the Limelight, (London, 1959), p.63; P. Graves, The Life of Sir Percy Cox, (London, 1941), p.205.
 2. F.O.882/24/SY/19. No, 34436/75/19. 15th November 1919.
 3. F.O.371/5129/E.6324. Young's comment dated 14th June 1920.
 4. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, (Newcastle), 31st January 1920.
 5. F.O.371/5130/E.7219. No. R.7392. 18th June 1920.
 6. H. St.J. Philby, Journal of Central Asian Society, Vol.7, 1920, p.114.
 7. Letter from A. Hirtzel dated 16th July 1919. Cited in J. Marlowe, op. cit., p.165

My task here is to examine the above argument, elaborating on the political development of the Iraqi Officers' movement. A certain emphasis will be given to its two trends, the moderate and the militant. Such an approach is not justified by its originality alone. It is put forward to provide a more comprehensive understanding of political events in Iraq, the pattern they assumed and the way in which they were brought to a conclusion.

It will be suggested that the 'illiberal' line of the Civil Commissioner played into the hands of the militants and enabled them to dominate the independence movement to the exclusion of the more moderate elements. This hastened the clash and brought about the outbreak of political violence. The rising thoroughly discredited the Wilsonian line. Political changes became imperative. However the military defeat of the uprising and British fear of the extremists was to turn the balance once more in favour of the more moderate elements. Thus the British 'liberals' who had gained the upper hand were to encourage the moderates to lead the attempt at establishing a new Administration in Iraq. A deal was concluded with the moderates and a new order was formed in Iraq, an order which met some of the nationalists' demands and yet retained a predominantly British influence.

Some emphasis will also be given to the role of Faisal who by superb shrewdness managed to strike a balance between the extreme nationalists and the British Authorities. Such a balance, it will be suggested, was a major factor behind his success in obtaining the Iraqi throne.

A detailed study of the British policy and its dynamics is outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, in dealing with Arab nationalist activities, it will be essential to refer, when relevant and necessary, to certain British attitudes.

CHAPTER V

THE 'POLITICS' OF THE IRAQI OFFICERS, 1912-1918: BRITAIN AS AN ALLY

A nationalist movement is often a by-product of socio-economic development, intellectual influences and foreign domination. It has been pointed out in this work that, although the two former elements were evident in Iraq, they were not sufficiently developed to constitute suitable ground for the independent growth of the nationalist movement in Iraq. However, there was another channel by which nationalist ideas were penetrating the Iraqi mind.

(a) The Rise of the Iraqi Officers as a Political and Social Group

By the end of the 19th century, limited expansion of schools in Iraq had encouraged some ambitious students to further their education as the best means of securing influential posts in the social structure. The well-to-do and enlightened families had preferred to send their children abroad to obtain a higher education. The regulations of the Ottoman Army and the military schools provided the less wealthy students with a golden opportunity. These schools demanded no fees, and also paid a reasonable salary to their students, provided them with accommodation, and promised them a well-paid rank in the Ottoman army after their graduation. This opportunity was taken by some sixty students each year, who left Iraq for Constantinople for military education.

In Turkey, the Iraqi students were to become aware of their Arab entity and solidarity. By living in a non-Arab community which expressed certain Turkish nationalistic tendencies, the Iraqis were bound to feel their Arabism and resent Turkish superiority. Furthermore Constantinople was flooded with Arabs who were active in their own open societies and their underground organizations. The Iraqis were to be influenced, join, and subsequently even lead these activities.

The remarkable political success achieved by this group of Iraqi intellectuals,¹ mainly of military professions, cannot be explained only on the basis

1. Those Iraqis who had the chance of learning abroad, pursuing their academic studies and gaining political experience, were to become the pioneers of the Iraqi nationalist movement and form the backbone of the Iraqi administration after independence and as late as 1958.

Of the education they had acquired. The acquisition of political power needs, in addition to knowledge, dynamic action and proper alliances, and in this respect this group was especially well-endowed, for the following reasons:

1. They formed the first, and most effective, political and nationalist organization in pre-independent Iraq (al 'Ahd).
2. A large number of them joined the Hijaz uprising and occupied leading positions in its ranks. By that they gained military and administrative experience, and made contacts with the British and earned their relative confidence and understanding.
3. They participated in Faisal's era of the shortly-lived independent Syria. In fact the Iraqi officers had the lion's share of the Arab administration, a fact which was consequently to play a role in shattering Wilson's 'claim' that the Iraqis were not mature enough to form and lead a native administration.¹
4. During their Syrian days, 1918-1920, the Iraqi officers were (for reasons to be discussed later) very active in inciting a campaign against Wilson's administration. By virtue of that the Iraqi officers were to present themselves as the leading body to replace Wilson's era.

There have been several studies on the social structure of the military and the intelligentsia and their motives for intervening in the politics of the underdeveloped countries in general² and Arab states in particular.³

However, none of these studies have formulated a final theoretical analysis for such a structure or motive.⁴ All these works do not preclude certain

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1. G. Bell, The Private letters and Papers, Library of Newcastle University, dated 30th January 1921.
 2. For instance, see S.P. Huntington, editor, Changing Patterns of Military Politics, (Glencoe, 1962); S.E. Finer, The Man on Horseback: the Role of the Military in Politics, (London, 1962); M. Janowitz, The Military in the Development of New Nations, (Chicago, 1964); John J. Johnson (editor), The Role of the Military in Under-developed countries, (Princeton, 1967).
 3. Eliezer Be'eri, Army officers in Arab politics and society, (London, 1970); S.N. Fischer (editor), The Military in the Middle East, (Ohio, 1963).
 4. A marxist and Soviet writer admits that 'we do not yet possess any study of those elements of society in the underdeveloped countries which do not fit into the concept of "bourgeoisie" but which in many countries play a very large, or even leading role. I have in mind the intelligentsia and the Army'. G. Mirski, 'Creative Marxism and problems of national revolution', translated into English and published in The Mizan Newsletter, London, April 1964, p.5.

remarks which will clarify both the reasons behind, and the scope of, the Iraqi officers' political action.

The first remark which one can make concerning the Iraqi nationalists who had acquired their education and political training abroad, is that the overwhelming majority of them were, ethnically speaking, Arabs, Moslems and Sunnis, and socially speaking were descendant from humble backgrounds and had chosen military careers.¹ It has been suggested that out of 113 active Arab nationalists in several organizations in Constantinople, only one was Egyptian, 18 Iraqi and the rest from greater Syria. Of the 94 Syrians (51 Syrian, 22 Palestinians and 21 Lebanese) only ten were soldiers, whereas all the 18 Iraqis were military officers.²

It is not difficult to elucidate the reasons for these common characteristics. The Ottoman discriminatory policy toward religious minorities explains the obvious absence of Jews, Christians or Shi'ah from the ranks of the armed forces. Being of humble social origins and military are two sides of the same coin. The Iraqis were, in comparison with the Syrians, poor in both their education and income. The military career was subjectively and objectively the only available option if their ambitions were to be realised.³

However, on completing their studies and on being appointed as officers, they would have departed from their original social base and entered a new social formation. Nevertheless, this new group continued to differ from other sections of the middle class in at least two important respects: first, its members were non-propertyed and wholly dependent on their salaries; secondly,

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1. Of the active members of al 'Ahd, during the period prior to the War, it is possible to trace the following names: Yāsīn al Hāshimī, Nuri Sa'id, Taha al Hāshimī, Jamīl Madfa'i, 'Alī Jawdat, Tahsīn 'Alī, Sharīf Fārouqī, Mawlud Mukhlis, 'Abd al Raḥman Sharīf, 'Abd al Ghafār al Shālji, 'Abd al Hamīd al Shālji, 'Abd Allāh al Dulāimī, Hamdī al Bājahji, 'Abd al Ghafour al Badrī, Muḥammad Hilmi, 'Alī Ridā and Muwafaq Kāmil. With the exception of al Bājahji all the above-mentioned shared the same characteristics of being Moslem Sunnis, of being from humble social backgrounds, and of being military officers.
 2. C.E. Dawn, 'The Rise of Arabism in Syria', Middle East Journal, Vol.16, No.2.
 3. It has been suggested that 'the officer class is recruited from the lower strata of society'.
E. Be'eri, op. cit., p.302.

their commitment was to military culture and traditions.

This social structure casts a lot of light on the political behaviour of the Iraqi officers during 1914-1921. It had an important role in motivating the officers to be, on the one hand, aggressively against the British administration which, under Wilson's plans, deprived them of the essentials of their economic life. And, on the other hand, they were ready to endorse a British-inspired solution which offered them paid positions in a formula of an 'independent' Iraq. In straightforward, perhaps even crude, terms an Iraqi ex-bimbashi of the Ottoman artillery declared, 'Under the Turks I was employed at so many liras a month; now I get nothing and the English will give me nothing. I want an Arab Government: and a salary'.¹ Another example is quite indicative: a significant number of Iraqi officers declined, while being war prisoners, to join the Hijaz uprising. Their refusal was not based on political resentment, but exclusively on career grounds.²

Furthermore, the Iraqi officers, being a non-propertied group, have enjoyed a considerable degree of social autonomy vis-à-vis other sections of society. When one is dealing with the wealthy families of Iraqi towns, tribal sheikhs and Shi'ah 'Ulemā', it is easy to see the profound effect, local or national, that the socio-economic conditions had on their political conduct.³ However, this was not the case with the military elite, whose political behaviour was not ruled by economic interaction with any other social group. Such a considerable social autonomy was to be reflected in a remarkable political flexibility. This 'freedom of action' gave the military elite an immense political advantage, especially in a society like Iraq which was characterized by uncrystallized socio-economic conditions and ruled by a foreign power which was not reluctant to change its methods of domination.

Nevertheless, this remarkable freedom of action did not amount to absolute

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1. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, (Newcastle), dated 24 May 1920
 2. Ibrāhīm al Rāwī, Min al Thawra al 'Arabiya al Kubra ila al 'Irāq al Hadīth (Beirut, 1969), p.20.
 3. See the previous discussion on Tālib's attitude and the forthcoming discussion on tribal politics.

independence from the forces, social or otherwise,¹ existing in the given conditions of the Iraqi situation of that time. It was not, in the last resort, the activities of the officers alone which had decided the course of Iraqi political development. Without the emergence of the nationalist-tribal-Shi'i alliance, the officers' efforts would have been very marginal indeed.

Furthermore, the relationship of other sections of the Iraqi society (namely the tribal sheikhs, the Shi'ah 'Ulemā' and the wealthy families) to the state was vital in determining their politics. However, such a relationship was, relatively speaking, of a limited scope. It was governed by two dimensions: none of these groups possessed the means or capabilities to achieve the actual domination of the state; furthermore, each of these sections' attitudes towards the state were decided by demands of undeniable importance, but which did not amount to a decisive character.² However, the case of the intelligentsia and military elite was radically different.

In the first place, the military and the intellectual elite were capable of controlling the state, and indeed had ambitions to do so. Their awareness of their education and advanced position, in comparison with other sectors of the society, had nurtured such a desire. Furthermore their experience in Hijaz and Syria where the Iraqi officers were 'running the whole military and civil administration' had nourished their confidence and determination to achieve such an aim.

Moreover the officers were totally dependent on the state for their employment and career. For them the question of controlling the state, or in fact its creation, was by no means an academic or trivial one. It was their essential and most decisive cause.

1. For a more elaborate discussion of the subject, see: T.B. Bottomore, Elites and Society, (London, 1966), pp.93-111.

2. For instance, the major interest of the tribes was basically the land and taxation system; for the absentee landlords it was the guarantee of their claimed revenues; for the mercantile families it was the freedom of trade. All these demands were in the final analysis either local (as different from national), soluble (within the undrastically changed frame of the existing administration), or both.

In this respect it is necessary to point out a special attribute which was particular to Iraqi conditions. The Iraqi officers were serving in the Ottoman army which, by 1918, ceased to possess any authority over any Iraqi or Arab territories. Most of those officers had either deserted their ranks in the Ottoman army and joined the Hijaz uprising or the Syrian administration, were unemployed, or still serving in the Turkish army but longing to return to their country of origin. Thus they were trapped in an unenviable historical paradox; army officers without armed forces. For them the need to establish an Iraqi army and administration had become a task of supreme urgency.¹

From a cultural point of view, there was more than one factor which politicized the Iraqi officers. They were of an Islamic tradition which did not emphasize the separation of military and political functions. Furthermore, most of the Iraqi officers were educated in the Ottoman army during the period between 1880-1914. This army was, by that time, the centre of the C.U.P. activities and intrigues, which subsequently resulted in successive military coups (1908-1914).

The final outcome of these developments was that the real political power was centred in the hands of the military officers. The force of example, and probable actual participation undoubtedly had far-reaching consequences on the minds of the Iraqi officers.

The combination of all these factors explains the intensity of 'politics' among Iraqi officers. When Lawrence claimed that 'seven out of every ten Mesopotamian-born officers' belonged to the al 'Ahd society,² this might be considered as an enthusiastic account. However, no similar statement could be made about any of the other sectors of the Iraqi society.

1. This remark by no means intends to disown the nationalist ideals of the officers. On the relationship between the officers and the state, see: Manfred Halpern, 'Middle Eastern Armies and the New Middle Class', in John H. Johnson (editor), op. cit., p.279

2. T.E. Lawrence, op. cit., p.45.

(b) al 'Ahd Society; the Formative Period: 1913-1914

This Society, which played a profound role in the political history of Iraq, was formed in Constantinople on the 28th October 1913 by 'Aziz 'Ali al Maşri and some other Arab officers, the majority of whom were of Iraqi origin.

Al 'Ahd stepped up Arab demands and advocated a federal state,¹ in which the Arabs were to form, within it, their own autonomous state. This reveals two important points; it shows the speed in which Arab nationalist aspirations were maturing. On the other hand, it exposes that, up to the eve of the First World War, the Arab nationalists did not demand complete independence or separation from the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless the fast development from demanding equality to decentralization, and then to federation, reflects a growing nationalist consciousness.

The programme of al 'Ahd included the following interesting aims:

1. The 'Ahd is a political and underground society.² Its aim is the autonomous independence of the Arab bilād (country) and its confederation with Constantinople on lines resembling those existing between Austria and Hungary.
2. The Islamic Caliphate should continue to be preserved by the Ottomans.
3. The society render special interest towards the security of Constantinople and its protection from imperialist Western states.
4. For six hundred years the Turks have been occupying the eastern garrisons against the West. The Arab nation should prepare itself to be the reserve power for these garrisons'.³

The founders of this society were mainly Iraqi officers in Constantinople with some few Syrian officers. However, al 'Ahd was contemporary to another Arab

1. It is interesting to observe that Jami'iat al Ikḥā' al 'Arabi al 'Uthmāni (Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood Society), which, in many ways, was the first serious political Arab group, had called for the equality of all subjects of the Ottoman Empire regardless of their nationality or religion, and proclaimed its support for the C.U.P.(i) The Ottoman decentralization party, which was formed in 1910, demanded the decentralization of the Empire in addition to certain political rights to be guaranteed to the Arabs.

(i) M. al Başir, op. cit., pp.16-17.

2. 'Djemal Pasha ... admitted that the Turkish Government, in spite of all its efforts, had never known anything of this committee /al 'Ahd/ but its name'. F.O.882/24/SY.19.4. Note by the Arab Bureau, Cairo, dated April 1919, 'On the Committee of Covenant'.

3. Ahmed 'Izzat al A'dami, al Qadiya al 'Arabiya, (Baghdad, 1931-34), 4 vols. Vol.4, p.53.

nationalist society which was dominated by Syrian civilians. The Young Arab, al 'Arabiya al Fetat, was formed on the 14th November 1909. The group was also an underground one, and in its aims, in as far as Arab autonomy was concerned, was quite similar to al 'Ahd. Its field of activities was among Arab civilians in Constantinople and Paris.¹ It is interesting to observe that this society was very influential among Syrians, but had a very limited impact on the Iraqis.² Nevertheless, contacts between the two groups were established before and during the First World War.³

The programme of al 'Ahd clearly reflects three important political tendencies which had existed among Iraqi officers during the period directly preceeding the First World War: their Arab nationalist tendency; their 'Islamic' and Ottoman sympathies; and their resentment of Western penetration.

However, this brings to light the profound extent to which the Iraqi nationalist movement had been influenced by the impact of the non-Iraqi Arab nationalists. The Iraqi subjective and internal conditions, taken exclusively, could not have accounted for the development of an anti-Western attitude among the Iraqi nationalists. It is more than likely that the Ottoman federal inclination of al 'Ahd (as opposed to complete Arab independence) was inspired by al Maşri,⁴ who also played a role in al 'Ahd's original anti-Western attitude.⁵

'Aziz 'Ali al Maşri (1880-1964), was, beyond doubt, the most influential and outstanding personality among the 'Arab' officers of the Ottoman Army.⁶ It

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1. Dr. Ahmed Qadri, Mudhekerāti 'an al Thawra al 'Arabiya al Kubra, (Damascus, 1956), pp.6-13.
 2. Sulīmān Musa, 'Jam'iyat al 'Arabiya al Fetāt', al 'Arabi, No.151, (Kuwait, 1971), p.54. The author listed the names of 45 members of this society. Only one was an Iraqi (Tawfiq al Suwaidi).
 3. Ibid., p.56. Also 'Izzat Darwaza, Hawl al Ḥaraka al 'Arabiya, (Ṣaīda, 1950), Vol.1, pp.32-3.
 4. F.O.371/3396/11436; also, Hasan Sa'b, The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire, (Amsterdam, 1958), p.234.
 5. Such a tendency was remarkably weakened during the Hijaz uprising and was replaced by an alliance with the British. However, the anti-British inclination was revived, in an intensified form, during 1918-1920.
 6. Djemal Pasha, op. cit., p.61; T.E. Lawrence, op. cit., p.59; Al Başir, op. cit., pp.22-35; also, al Rāwī, op. cit., pp.50, 70-72, 102.

seems that al Maşri's life, having been spent both in Egypt and Constantinople, had developed in him a rather original trend which was composed of two-fold attitudes; an Arab-national inclination, and a firm and irreconcilable attitude toward British policy and interests. It was in Egypt that he grew up and completed his studies at a high school in Cairo, during the Cromer period (1883-1907). Hostility to the British, and a 'nostalgia' toward the Ottomans were the dominant features of the Egyptian national movement at that historical stage. His resentment of the British was cultivated during that time and lasted throughout his political life,¹ with the exception of a temporary and limited relaxation during 1914-1917.² It is more than probable that his Ottoman federalist inclination was also the outcome of that stage of his life. In Constantinople, where al Maşri embarked on a brilliant military career, he, being an Arab-speaking person, was to be identified with the Arabs and to develop an Arab national outlook.

Between 1908 and 1915, al Maşri played a remarkable military and political role in Ottoman and Arab affairs. His achievements in Yemen (1911) and in Libya (1912) were to enhance his influence. However he was arrested (February 1914), tried and expelled from Turkey in April 1914. It is most likely that his trial was motivated by political rather than personal reasons.³

The effect of al Maşri's arrest on the Arabs and the Arab movement produced two results: (a) Arab public opinion was outraged at the incident which was taken very bitterly indeed;⁴ (b) the absence of al Maşri left the Iraqi officers in political confusion and with a lack of leadership at a rather decisive moment. Furthermore, the Turks embarked on a series of suppressive political measures to soften the Arab movement. Most of these actions were taken against Iraqi

1. Anwar al Sādāt, Asrār al thawra al Maşriya, (Cairo, 1956), pp.61, 111, 115-16.

2. It seems that the British pressure had some part in preventing al Maşri's execution by the Turks in 1914. Lawrence, op. cit., p.75; R. Storrs, p.179.

3. That was the official view of the British Ambassador to Turkey; see M. Khadduri, 'Aziz 'Ali al Masri ..., op. cit., p.151, footnote.

4. Asa'd Dāghir, op. cit., p.108; al Başīr, op. cit., pp.27-32; also S. Faīdi, op. cit., pp.150-151

officers.¹

(c) The Iraqi Officers' early contacts with the British

Thus it is hardly surprising that when the universal hostilities broke out, the Iraqi officers were taken by surprise and lacked both a clear outlook and a plan of action. However, this was only one aspect of the problem. The other factor lay in the Iraqi officers' suspicions 'that when the Allies talked liberation, in their hearts they meant annexation'.²

Thus, 'as soon as it had become evident that Turkey was coming into the War, 'Aziz 'Ali had from his retirement in Egypt, sent a peremptory message to the leading members of al 'Ahd: that they were on no account to be tempted into hostile action against Turkey, as the fact of her becoming belligerent would expose her Arab provinces to foreign conquest; until some effective guarantees against European designs were obtained, it was their duty to stand by Turkey'.³

However, it seems that the idea of co-operating with the British to obtain Arab independence was tempting for at least some of the Iraqi officers. In September 1915, Mulāzim Awal (First-lieutenant) Muḥammad Sharīf al Fārouqī⁴ deserted the Ottoman troops and surrendered himself to the British Authorities in Egypt. He claimed that his arrival was on behalf of al 'Ahd officers to conduct negotiations with the British. He was interviewed by the Intelligence Department of the War Office in Cairo on the 12th September 1915. Muḥammad al Fārouqī gave a long statement, in which he summed up the Arab aims and principles:

1. Taha al Hāshimi was transferred to the Yemen, and his brother, Yāsīn, to Édirne. Maḥmūd Adīb ('Ahd) was arrested. Rashīd al Khoja (Commander of Baghdad, C.U.P. member, but with Arab nationalist tendencies) and 'Abd al Laṭīf al Falāḥī ('Ahd) were called to Constantinople for interrogation. But, while in Beirut, they were helped to escape by Ṣabīḥ Nasha't (Commander of Police, C.U.P. member, but with Arab nationalist inclinations). Nuri al Sa'id and Dr. 'Abd Allah al Damalouji ('Ahd, civilian) defied a warrant for arrest and escaped to Basrah, where they assumed Ṭālib's protection. Nuri, being military (First Lieutenant), and because his activities were exposed during al Maṣri's trial, was sentenced to death for desertion. He remained in Basrah up to the British occupation.

2. D. Lloyd George, Memoires of the Peace ..., op. cit., vol.2, p.669.

3. George Antonius, op. cit., p.155.

4. Al Fārouqī belonged to a wealthy family in Mosul. He was a member of al 'Ahd. After his escape to Egypt he was to become King Hussein's representative to the British in Cairo.

'Mesopotamia, Syria and Arabia were to form one and the same country ... which would be based on the following bases:

1. the establishment of a friendly treaty with the English ...
2. the Arab countries to be governed by the principle of decentralisation ...
3. Sharif Hussein of Mecca to be the Caliph and Sultan of the new Empire to whom we have already paid allegiance ...
4. Although the new empire we wish to establish is to be headed by a Caliph, its basis will be national and not religious. It will be an Arab not a Moslem Empire.
5. Christian Arabs, Druses ... will have the same rights as Moslems, but the Jews will be governed by a special law'.¹

A few weeks later, Fārouqi was interviewed by the Director of the British Military Intelligence in Egypt. In this meeting Fārouqi claimed:

'Turkey and Germany are fully alive to the situation and have already approached the leaders of the Young Arab Committee and, indeed, have gone so far as to promise them the granting of their demands in full.'²

But, al Fārouqi went on to say,

'The Committee, however, are strongly inclined toward England, whom they regard as the one power on whom they can rely ... We should prefer to have a promise of half from England than of the whole from Turkey and Germany'.³

The subjective motives for Fārouqi's claims were clear enough. The man was trying his best to be persuasive, even at the cost of the truth. However, it remains that his former statement, although it might have been accepted by the British and influenced their subsequent policy, was in fact 'with no foundation'.

It is clear that Fārouqi had impressed the British authorities in Egypt: the Director of their Military Intelligence wrote to the Secretary of the War Office:

'A favourable reply to the Arab proposals, even though it did not satisfy their aspirations entirely, would probably put the seal on their friendship. The influential leaders appear open to reason and ready to accept a considerably less ambitious scheme than that which they have formulated ... On the other hand, to reject the Arab proposals entirely or even to seek to evade the issue, will be to throw the Young Arab Party definitely into the arms of the enemy. Their machinery will at once be employed against us throughout the Arab countries ... the effect of which would certainly be far-reaching and at the present crisis might well be disastrous'.⁴

1. F.O.882/15/PNA/15/6. Intelligence Dept. W.O. Cairo, 12 September 1915, Statement of Captain X (Farugi)

2. F.O.882/13/MIS/15/13, Cairo, 11th October, 1915.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. Italics mine.

In a highly important telegram from Sir Mark Sykes to Sir Percy Cox these vital issues were dealt with more elaborately:

'They /Arab Committee/ are obliged for political reasons to demand absolute independence, that is partly why members of committee among prisoners are not open about subject ...¹

Their real ambition is to have an independent Syria and Hedjaz. Vilayets of Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo, Mosul, Baghdad and Sanjaks of Urfa, Deir Zor, Jerusalem to form a progressive State under suzerainty of Sharif. However this would be qualified by agreement with France and Great Britain. France to have a monopoly of all enterprise and special educational facilities in region West of Euphrates as far as Darez Zor and in Palestine (sic). No Europeans but Frenchmen to be employed by Arab state in that area, but Arab state not to be obliged to employ European advisers unless it chooses.

Great Britain to have some rights in Irak and Jazireh. Basra town and lands south to borders of Kowait and to Fao to be British absolutely. Lands to the North of line Alexanderetta, Aintab, Urfa to be French absolutely.'

In a rather cynical tone, Sykes concluded his telegram by suggesting:

'If we have a permanent monopoly of enterprise and of European assistance Military and Civil in Mosul, Baghdad and Basra provinces, and we administer Baghdad and Basra provinces for duration of war, I think that we need not fear the future. If Pan-Arabism succeeds and if does not we have given nothing away.'²

Fārouqi had obviously over-extended the limits of his 'persuasive' approach by offering the British wide and unauthorized concessions. One says that, bearing in mind that on the 23rd May 1915, representatives of al 'Ahd and al Fetat had submitted, in Damascus, an agreed-upon plan of action to Faisal 'defining the conditions on which the Arab leaders would be prepared to co-operate with Great Britain against Turkey'.³ In this protocol Arab nationalists demanded:

'The recognition by Great Britain of the independence of the Arab countries lying within the following frontiers:

North: The line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37°N and thence along the line Birejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat (Ibn U'mar)-to the Persian Frontier;

East: The Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf;

South: The Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden, whose status was to be maintained);

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1. Could it not be that those prisoners were either unaware of Fārouqi's concessions, or did not approve?
 2. F.O.882/13/MIS/15/18, dated 22nd November 1915. Italics mine.
 3. George Antonius, op. cit., p.157

'West: The Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.

The abolition of all exceptional privileges granted to foreigners under the Capitulations.

The conclusion of a defensive alliance between Great Britain and the future independent Arab state.

The grant of economic preference to Great Britain'.¹

It is against this background that one could argue that the concession which was given by Fārouqi and thereafter by Ḥussein not only departed and deviated from the basic and agreed-upon programme of Arab nationalists, but also had hindered and deformed the growth of Arab nationalism and undermined the Anglo-Arab relations. Here we are faced with concessions given by a supposed representative of a movement without the prior knowledge, not to mention agreement, of his fellow comrades. The overwhelming majority of Arab nationalists were to expect, being unaware of the real agreements, the maximum achievements of their aims. The British, in their turn, had over-estimated the 'reasonableness' of Arab nationalists and contented themselves with the false impression that Fārouqi, Ḥussein or Nuri al Sa'id were the actual representatives of Arab nationalists. When the moment of truth became clear, it was very difficult to avoid a strong clash between the embittered and frustrated Arab nationalists and the British presence in the Arab world.

However, the British were, at that time, conducting their negotiations with the Sharif Ḥussein of Mecca. The successful conclusions of this dialogue, in addition to the lack of any political flexibility on the part of the Turks,² were major factors behind the outbreak of the Hijaz uprising in 1916. The general impact of this movement on the Iraqis and the attitudes taken by the Iraqi nationalists towards the Hashimite rising deserves some attention.

(d) The Iraqi officers and the Hashimite Rising 1916-1918

The Hijaz uprising, being supported militarily, politically and financially by the British Government, was considered, with justification, as a pro-British

1. Ibid., pp.157-8.

2. In March 1915, Ḥussein sent a telegram to Anwar Pasha requesting, in return for his active support, a general amnesty for Arab political prisoners, a decentralization system for Syria and the recognition of Mecca Amirate as hereditary one. Anwar replied, in a harsh and blunt tone, rejecting all of these demands.

Amin Sa'id, Asrār ..., op. cit., pp.51-3.

action. Thus, the whole event was subsequently to pose the question of the extent of British commitment to Arab nationalism. For the Arab nationalists, the question which confronted them was on the desirability of such an alliance and its trustworthiness.

The Hijaz movement took place just after the hanging of Syrian Arab nationalists, conducted by Jemal Pasha. Taking also into account the deeply-rooted hostility toward the Turks among Syrian nationalists, it was logical that the Hijaz rising was to be welcomed in Syria.¹ In Egypt, the reaction was one of a furious condemnation.² Even Rashīd Riḍā, who took part in the contacts with the British, was to publicly criticise Ḥussein's action.³

In Iraq the reaction was ruled by different factors;

'The news of the Sharif's rebellion created no particular excitement in the slow-moving minds of the local people. Many are too ill-informed either to grasp its importance or to credit it at all. The active pro-Turkish party (headed by a number of ex-officials) think that it was unfair of the Sharif to raise the question of Arab independence while Turkey was at war. Shia Arabs, whose sympathies towards us are natural, seem to be pleased, and hope that the Sharif's declaration will be extended to Irak. The few Sunnies (who include a number of pan-Arabs) are delighted ...'⁴

The sympathetic attitude of the Shi'ah could be explained by:

The Hashimites' descent from 'Ali and their religious position;

The Hijaz uprising coincided with two similar Shi'i actions in Iraq. Namely: the takeover of Najaf (April 1915) and Kerbalā' (May 1916).

Indeed, 'the news of the Sharif's rebellion created no particular excitement' in Iraq. The British Authorities in Iraq, being an extension of the Indian

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1. In October 1915, Faisal, on behalf of his father, went to Damascus and held several meetings with Arab nationalists to discuss the situation. Of the important elements he met there were: Ali Riḍā al Rikabi (representative of the al 'Arabiya al Fetāt) and Yāsīn al Hāshimī and many other representatives of Syrian public opinion. Faisal was encouraged toward the idea of an anti-Turkish rebellion. In late 1914 the Young Arab sent Fawzi al Bakri to Hijaz to discuss with Ḥussein the need for an Aran uprising.
 2. The Hijaz movement was considered as an English conspiracy to break the Moslem Unity. The Azhar 'Ulemā' issued a Fetwa which condemned 'the traitors and renegades who support the English puppet King Ḥussein bin 'Ali'. Dr. M. Ḥussein, op. cit., p.39.
 3. al-Manār, No.19, Cairo 1916, p.156; also Shakīb Arsalān, Sayid Rashīd Riḍā ..., op. cit., pp.203, 240.
 4. F.O.882/25/15 Arab Bureau Papers.

administration, were in fact opposed to the Hijaz venture.¹ Consequently it was the British in Iraq who suppressed the news of the pro-British movement in Hijaz and played down its political significance.

However, there were other factors behind the absence of a strong favourable response towards the Hashimite movement among Iraqi nationalists. The Hashimites were not, prior to 1916, an active part of the Arab nationalist movement. Hussein assumed the Amirate of Hijaz in 1908, and his sons, Faisal and 'Abd Allah, became deputies of Hijaz in the Ottoman House of Deputies. Throughout this period none of them took part in Arab nationalist activities or even had shown any sympathies with its aims. Faisal confessed to Antonius that, prior to 1915, he did not belong to any Arab society.² In fact, it was Dr. Ahmed Qadri who acquainted Faisal, in Spring 1915, of the aims of the al Fetāt.³ Nevertheless, the Hashimites, thanks to their religious status, had always enjoyed a favourable position in Arab nationalist circles. Since the days of Kawākibi up to the attempts of Sayid Ṭalib and al Fetāt, the Hashimites were seen as the best candidates for the Arab Caliphate. Having stated that, it is important to note: (a) the Arab nationalists had never offered the Hashimites political leadership, but only religious authority; (b) the platform of al 'Ahd made it clear that the Caliphate should remain in the hands of the Ottomans.

The tyrannical behaviour of Hussein himself in conducting the political and military affairs of the uprising, did not form an acceptable type of

1. Moberly wrote: '... the Indian authorities did not welcome the idea. They did not conceal their opinion that such action would be regarded by very many Mohamedans in and on the border of India as having been inspired by us and consequently as Christian interference with their religion; the Governor of India anticipated that the Sharif's authority would be insufficient to prevent Arabs in Mesopotamia from joining the Turks; ... the Sharif raised the standard of revolt at the beginning of June; and it soon became clear that large numbers of Mahomedans in India and the North West frontiers regarded him and his Arabs as enemies of Islam ... Caused the authorities in India considerable trouble and anxiety'. F.J. Moberly, op. cit., Vol.III, pp.26-7.

2. G. Antonius, op. cit., p.132.

3. Dr. Ahmed Qadri, op. cit., p.46

political leadership. In this respect it is sufficient to mention that even Faisal, up to 1919, was left by his father in complete ignorance as to the contents of his agreements with the British.¹ 'Abd Allah gave a highly critical account of his father's military knowledge, or perhaps lack of knowledge, which was worsened by his resentment of any advice, even from those nearest to him.² Such impressions were often echoed by other Arabs, such as al Maşri, Riḍā and others.

The Hashimite platform which assumed a conservative approach³ was hardly an attractive focus for young Arab nationalists. The uprising manifesto incriminated the C.U.P. of 'restricting the power of the great Sultan and thus violating al Shara' ... making prayers and fasting voluntary in the armed forces ... harrassing some rich families ... advocating equality of male and female in inheritance⁴ ... allowing freedom to some anti-Islam papers'. The declaration went on to promise a complete independence to the Arabs with a government based on Islamic Shara'. It is highly interesting that the proclamation failed to specify the boundaries of the promised Arab state.

It has been pointed out throughout this work that the Islamic reformers, the Arab nationalists and the Shi'ah 'Ulemā', however great their devotion to Islam was, were opposed to the conservative forms of 'Islam' and have supported the constitutional reforms and the attempts at the renewal of Islam. The concept of 'Islam' to these groups lay in the preservation of the Caliphate and the unity of Moslems against Western influence. Tasks

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1. Faisal confided to Gertrude Bell that while he was in Paris in 1919 (to attend the Peace Conference) his father 'was continually urging me to force the Allies to fulfil their promises to the Arabs, I did not even know what the promises were - I had never seen the correspondence with McMahon'. G. Bell, Private letters and papers, Newcastle 'Interview with Faisal', p.6.
 2. 'Abd Allah bin Husseīn, op. cit., p.174 and after.
 3. 'Abd Allah in his memories argued that the Arabs without an Ottoman Caliphate were 'body without a head', he praised 'Abd Al Ḥamid's rule, attacked the C.U.P. reforms and even the idea of an Arab Caliphate. Ibid., pp.21-6, 34-5, 237.
 4. This point was added by the British Authorities in Cairo who put certain changes on the original manifesto.

which were hardly assured by Hussein's endeavour.

This leads us directly to another important factor which contributed to undermine the popularity of the Hijaz movement among Arab nationalists, namely the close relations of the uprising with the British government.¹

All these factors were responsible for the primary weakness of the Hijaz movement in attracting the enthusiasm of the Iraqi nationalists. Such uncertainty was exposed in the hesitation shown by Iraqi nationalists to accept the British offer to them of joining the Hijaz uprising.² By tracing the circumstances of the officers who had joined the movement, it is interesting to find that nearly all of them were Britain's prisoners of war. They were faced with the choices of 'volunteering' to the Hijaz service, unemployment, or British prison camps. Even Nuri al Sa'id, who was to become the champion of the pro-British tendencies among Arab nationalists of that period, had in fact shown a remarkable reluctance, in spite of the death sentence, before finally committing himself to the Hashimite uprising. Ja'far al 'Askari,³ (another important officer and politician who was to reconcile his pro-British tendencies with his Arab national aspirations) joined the Hijaz service (became C-in-C of its troops) only after his capture by the British troops. However, it is interesting that the British Intelligence intercepted a rather indicative letter which was sent to him by Jamal Pasha. He asked him to desert the Hijaz service to the Ottoman troops and to 'remember the enthusiasm and firm determination with which you looked

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1. D. Lloyd George, Memoirs of Peace ..., op. cit., Vol.2, p.663
 2. G. Bell, Private Letters and papers. Memorandum 'Arab Aims', un.d., p.3. G. Bell argued 'the respect which his name /Hussein/ undoubtedly arouses is given to him as a religious luminary, the first in Islam, not as a political leader. At the same time there are individual instance of his being regarded as the centre of Arab unity, not by the better instructed town population, but among tribes and provincial Saiyids'. ibid., p.1.
 3. Ja'far al 'Askari (1884-1936), finished his high school studies in Baghdad and Mosul in 1901. In 1904 he graduated as Mulazim in the Ottoman Army. He served in Iraq and in 1910 was sent to Germany for higher military education. His absence in Germany (1910-1914) might explain his non-attendance to al 'Ahd. In 1915, he was appointed in Libya to participate in the attack on Egypt. On 26th February 1916 he was captured by the British (by that time he was a Colonel). After some hesitation he went to Hijaz at the end of 1916. Of high military and administrative capabilities, probably the only man in history to win both the German Iron Cross and the C.M.G.

forward to the liberation of Egypt¹. It is interesting to note that two officers and brothers of Ja'far (*Ali Ridā and Tahsīn) declined to join the Hashimites until after the fall of Damascus.

In fact the first seeds of the rift between Iraq nationalists was to occur at that time over the issue of the attitude to be taken towards the Hijaz movement in the light of its intimate relations with the British. Several nationalist officers refused to the end the idea of joining the movement.² Ṭaḥa al Ḥāshimī³ (serving at that time in the Yemen) declined to join the Hashimite uprising. He justified this attitude by his fear of British intentions and questioned the prudence of co-operation with them.⁴ Yāsīn al Ḥāshimī (1880-1937), another distinguished leader of al 'Ahd (who was during the War serving in Syria), took a similar stance. Even when the fall of Damascus became imminent, he rejected Faisal's offer, sent by a special envoy, to join the Arab army. Yāsīn told the envoy 'the English are faithful neither to Faisal nor to his father. After promising the establishment of an Arab state, the English agreed with the Jews and issued the Balfour declaration, they also agreed with the French to give them Syria and they have linked Iraq to India ...'.⁵ When Damascus was conquered by the British and Arab armies (3rd October, 1918), Yāsīn went underground until he was visited by *Ali Jawdat, Nuri al Sa'id and al Madfa'i. Yāsīn decided, after a long conversation, to give up his hesitation

1. F.O.371/3395/12077, dated 1917.

2. The following junior Iraqi officers refused to join the Hijaz (all of them were of Arab nationalist tendencies): Maḥmūd Sāmī; Sāmī al Naqshālī; Jamīl Kubṭān; Maḥmūd Rāmīz; Shākīr al Qaraghoulī; Muḥī al Dīn al Sahrawardī; Sulaymān Fetaḥ; Ḥussein 'Alwān; Shākīr Maḥmūd (Baghdad), Shākīr Maḥmūd (Musayeb). *Some of them were active in the spring of 1920. p. 390 footnote 3.*

3. Ṭaḥa al Ḥāshimī (1888-1961), graduated from the Military Academy in Constantinople in 1906, and in 1909 from the Staff College. He was one of the founders of al 'Ahd and was the one who wrote in its programme and organized a large number of Iraqi officers into its ranks. On the 26th December he was appointed in the Yemen. In 1918 he became Colonel and remained faithful to the Ottoman army. In 1919 Ṭaḥa al Hashimi became a prisoner of war in Aden and left there for Constantinople on the 26th October 1919. From Baghdad, humble and Sunni family.

4. In all modesty, al Ḥāshimī admitted that after the end of the War, he was received coolly by Faisal in Damascus. Faisal refused to offer him a job and bluntly told him 'We do not need you now, you came too late'. Ṭaḥa al Ḥāshimī, *Mudhakkirāt 1919-1943*, (Beirut, 1967). p.57, 8th May 1919.

5. Amin Sa'id, *op. cit.*, pp.258-9

and join his colleagues.¹

On the other hand, a large number of Iraqi officers decided to join the Hijaz uprising. All of them were prisoners of war who were persuaded by the British Authorities and by some of their Arab comrades to employ their military knowledge in the service of the Hashimites. This is not to suggest that their motives were only to gain their freedom. The risks involved in the Hijaz war, especially taking into account that they were ex-Ottoman officers, were of no simple consequence. The Arabs who helped in recruiting Arab officers were people like Nuri al Sa'id, Muzāhim al Bājahji, Muḥammed Sharīf al Fārouqi, and 'Ali Jawdat. All of them had a considerable reputation among Arab nationalists of that time. In fact a committee of 'Ahd members was formed in Cairo with the tasks of:

'... (a) to organise an anti-Turk system of espionage in conjunction with the British Military Authorities, and (b) to recruit Arabs in Palestine and the P/W camps for the northern Arab Army ...'.²

Thus, the first group of Arab officers arrived in Hijaz in July 1916. It was composed of 11 officers, of whom 8 were Iraqis and included Nuri al Sa'id.³ On the 5th September 1916, Azīz 'Ali al Maṣri reached Hijaz and was promptly appointed as Minister of Defence. The second group of Arab officers turned up in Hijaz in December 1916. This party was composed of 35 officers, of whom 21 were Iraqis; Mawlud Mukhliṣ, 'Ali Jawdat, 'Abd al Laṭīf Nuri, Jamāl al Madfa'i, 'Abd al Ḥamīd al Shālji, 'Abd Allah al Dulaīmi and others.⁴ Iraqi officers continued to arrive⁵ at Hijaz to serve the uprising.

1. 'Ali Jawdat, op. cit., pp.68-9

2. F.O.882/24/SY/19/4

3. The others were: Rashīd al Madfa'i, Sa'id al Madfa'i, Muḥammad Ḥulmi, Rāsim Sardist, Dāoud Ṣabri, Ibrāhīm al Rāwi and Rashīd al Hāshimī.

4. Shākir al Shaikhly, Rashīd al Inkouri, Barqi al 'Askari, 'Abd al Karīm Shāh, Ḥamīd al Wādi, Rashīd Khamās, Shākir al Rāwi, Shākir 'Abd al Wahāb, 'Abd al Razzāq al Khojha, Shākir al Nā'ib, Jamāl 'Ali, Rāuf al Shaikhly, 'Abd al Rāuf al Muṣlāwi, and 'Abd al Karīm al Tatari.

5. Some of the important Iraqi officers who arrived after that were: Ja'far al 'Askari, Ramadān Shellāsh, Mahmoud al Shahwāni, Ṣabri al 'Azāwi, Sāmi Ṣabri, Thābit 'Abd al Nur, Tahsīn 'Ali, Nāji Shawkit, 'Abd al Ghafour al Badri, Ibrāhīm Kamāl, Isma'il Nāmiq, Sa'id Yeha, Ḥamīd al Hāshimī, Ḥamīd al Qushṭīni, 'Abd Allah Ṣalīb, Isma'il Ṣābir, Sulīmān Masrour, 'Abd al Majīd al Shaikhly, Ahmed Nāji al Bājahji, Rashīd 'Ali and others.

It was an irony that the Iraqi officers who shouldered the burden of the uprising, were, in the meantime, not allowed by the British either to stay in Iraq or to play a parallel role in their home country. It was during the uncomfortable days of the Kut siege that the Foreign Office had proposed to the India Office to send al-Maṣri and Fārūqi to Iraq to help in raising an Arab resistance against the Turks. On the 30th March 1916, Basrah telegraphed the India Office rejecting the offer and stating that '... it appears to us that their political views and schemes are much too advanced to be safe ... and their presence in ... Irak would be in our opinion undesirable and inconvenient'.¹ Next day the India Office informed the Foreign Office that they 'would deprecate the mission ... in any circumstances'.²

This paradox played a big role in developing rather contradictory feelings in the officers' formative political outlook; a sense of hostility was dominant among them towards the British administration in Iraq. But this was modified by a feeling of alliance with the British in Cairo, Hijaz and Syria. It is not surprising that political antagonism towards the British was far more radical and irreconcilable among Iraq nationalists who were inside Iraq, or outside the ranks of the Hijaz movement, than of those who actually served in the Hashimite uprising. It is also interesting to observe that the British were subjected to the same phenomenon; those of them who served in an Iraq empty of its native administration cadres had developed a low opinion of Iraqi self-management qualities, the British who worked in Hijaz and Syria and came into contact with the Iraqi elite were more convinced of the Iraqis' administrative and political capabilities.³ The more sophisticated Iraqi nationalists (for instance, al-Sa'id, al-Askari and above all Faisal) were able to grasp the dichotomy within British policy and to act accordingly.

1. F.O.883/13/MES/16/7. From General P. Lake (Commander of British Force in Mesopotamia). No.1040.

2. F.O.371/2768/61639

3. One finds an interesting and clear contrast in the writings of Lawrence and Young on the one hand, and of Wilson, Thomas, Mann and Lyell on the other, in as far as Iraqi administrative qualities are concerned.

However, it is important to point out that the Iraqi officers who served in the Hijaz did not turn out to be entirely pro-British. Their nationalist aspirations were not blurred by their objective alliance.¹ Nuri Sa'id stated that when the news of the Balfour declaration (2nd November, 1917) had reached Hijaz, Iraqi officers were utterly disturbed and refused to take any military action against the Turks unless the British would clarify the matter.² After the occupation of Aqaba (July 1917), a serious dispute took place, Arab officers, led by Mawlud Mukhlis³ (Commander of the 1st Arab division) resented the delay in advancing north (Ma'an and consequently Syria), and rejected the British-inspired plan (Lawrence and Joyce) to keep them south of Ma'an. In April 1918, Mukhlis and his comrades wrote an angrily worded letter to Amir Faisal:

'We only joined the Arab Army to serve the Arab cause and to save our country from the Turks, not to gain salaries from England ... We see no reason behind the delay of our march to the North except the ill intentions of the English and their stooges'.⁴

The most serious and revealing of these incidents was that one related to 'Aziz al Ma'sri. Upon his arrival in Hijaz he was promptly appointed as Minister of Defence and Commander of Arab troops. It is most likely that his appointment, or even his arrival, which were not a source of pleasure to King Hussein,⁵ were imposed by British pressure⁶ rather than by nationalist officers' influence.⁷ 'Aziz suddenly (December 1916), and in obscure conditions, left Hijaz for Egypt. It seems that al Ma'sri was attempting a serious plot which, had it been successful, would have radically altered the march of Arab nationalist movement.

1. H. Young, op. cit., pp.196-8.

2. Nuri al Sa'id, Speech in London Conference on Palestine, 1939 (Baghdad, 1939).

3. Mawlud Mukhlis (1884-1954). From a humble Takriti family who lived in Mosul, finished his high school and joined the military academy in Constantinople in 1901. He was dismissed twice on account of his criticism of 'Abd al Hamid. An active member of C.U.P. he participated in their Coups. In 1913 he joined al 'Ahd; escaped from the Ottoman army in Iraq and went to Basrah where he joined the Hijaz movement and was arrested for a short time after the above incident.

4. T. al 'Umari, op. cit., Vol.2, p.244.

5. Ibid., Vol.1, p.378, 'Hussein rejected al Ma'sri because of his political life and his determined firm beliefs'.

6. Lawrence, op. cit., p.75; Storrs, op. cit., p.184

7. Anis Sā'igh, op. cit., p. 98

Khadduri wrote:

'Aziz Ali, as he told me, suggested that when the attack on Madina became imminent /October 1916/, a party of three would secretly contact the Ottoman command in Madina and propose ... that a joint Ottoman and Arab force, under his command, should immediately proceed to Makka, take over control of supreme command from Sharif Husayn, and negotiate a peaceful settlement with the Ottoman Porte on the basis of full Arab autonomy within the Ottoman Caliphate. 'Aziz Ali also contemplated negotiating directly with the German and Ottoman authorities in Syria with a view to arriving at a similar arrangement for other Arab lands ... the army officers in favour of cooperation with the British reported 'Aziz's plans to Sharif Ali'.¹

This reflects the fact that some Arab nationalists neither had much confidence in their British allies or in the leadership of Hussein, nor were their pro-Ottoman tendencies completely uprooted. Maşri's story to Khadduri was confirmed, rather vaguely, by two other reliable sources² and also by his subsequent behaviour. 'Ali Jawdat, in his memories, gave two contradictory accounts of this incident. On the one hand he denied that al Maşri intended any such contact.³ On the other hand, 'Ali Jawdat admitted that he had sent a cyphered letter to Fakhri Pasha (Commander of Madina), for transmission to Tal'at Pasha in Constantinople, containing similar ideas to the one mentioned in al Maşri's story, and without the knowledge of Amir 'Ali. It was al Maşri who provided 'Ali Jawdat with the cypher to contact the Turks in Madina and Constantinople and himself in Cairo.⁴ However, 'Ali Jawdat, in his turn, was deported by the British from Hijaz to Egypt in early 1917.⁵

1. Majid Khadduri, op. cit., p.154.

2. Fā'iz al Ghuṣiyan, Mudhakkirāti 'An al Thawra al 'Arabiya, (Damascus, 1956), p.239.

3. 'Ali Jawdat, op. cit., p.42

4. Ibid., pp.43-4

5. Ibid., pp.44-7

CHAPTER VI

IRAQI OFFICERS IN OPPOSITION TO THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION 1918-1920

The Iraqi Officers in Syria 1918-1920

Nevertheless, all the above-mentioned incidents remained virtually marginal; they cast a light on the prevailing anxiety amongst Iraqi Arab nationalists towards the question of alliance with Britain and the cutting of Ottoman links. However, and in the final analysis, the fact remains that Iraqi officers, by virtue of their actual participation in the Hashimite movement were practically involved in an alliance with Britain's policy. Thus it is fair to suggest that during 1916 to 1918 the dominant line among Iraqi officers was pro-British.

On the 3rd October 1918, Faisal entered Damascus which was deserted by the Turkish troops. Faisal was accompanied by his Iraqi officers and was later joined by a new group of them, of whom Yāsīn al Hāshimī was the most significant. In July 1920 Faisal was thrown out of Syria by the invading French army.

Between October 1918 and July 1920, Iraqi officers were not allowed (by Wilson) to return to Iraq. Thus they stayed in Syria and served under Faisal's regime. This period witnessed two major developments in the politics of the Iraqi officers: (a) a considerable widening of the already existing political split in the officers' ranks; (b) a sharp deterioration in Iraqi officers' relations with the British Authorities in Iraq.

(a) The Political Split among Iraqi Officers

The roots of the political split among nationalist Iraqi officers were already apparent according to the different attitudes taken by them in regard to the Hijaz movement.¹ It was only natural that these differences

1. One could distinguish three rather different groups: (i) those who had completely refused to join the movement on grounds of resentment against any co-ordination with the British (for instance, Yāsīn and Taha al Hashimī); (ii) on the other hand, one finds those who, since the time of their affiliation to the movement, had taken a clearly pro-British line (Nuri Sa'id and his brother-in-law Ja'far al 'Askari); (iii) somewhere in the centre were the officers who had actually joined the movement but did not cease to be politically suspicious of the British (Jamil Madfa'i, 'Ali Jawdat, Mawlud Mukhlis and Ramadān Shellash).

would take a clearer and sharper form after the officers' arrival in Damascus. Facing new tasks mainly concerning the political future of Iraq, the methods to be employed, and subsequent relations with the British, were vital issues which had broadened the rift among the nationalist officers.

However, certain factors played an important role in delaying the final rupture between the militant and the moderate sections of Iraqi officers:

(i) While Wilson's 'illiberal' policies were responsible for the outbreak of the conflict among the officers, yet such policies were a factor in preventing the dispute from assuming a sharp and final divorce. The militants saw Wilson's line as the embodiment of Britain's policy and its 'betrayal' of its Arab commitments. They demanded, and indeed practiced, violent methods to counter such plans. The moderates conceived Wilson's policy as being only temporary and a deviation from the intended British policy. They considered violence as both alienating and futile. Instead, they advocated persuasive and passive political methods which, in their opinion, could alter or modify the British policy. On the other hand, Wilson's policy, which did not distinguish between Arab friends and foes and treated both sides alike, had, in consequence, played a role in delaying the final break between militants and moderates.

(ii) Another element behind the preservation of, at least, a formal unity between Iraqi nationalist officers was the superbly skillful tactics of Amir Faisal. Although Faisal was very reluctant to provoke the British in any way, he still retained strong contacts with the militant Arab nationalists. He was aware that losing the militants' support would weaken his bargaining position vis-a-vis the British. However, he was equally aware that open involvement in radical schemes would deprive him of British sympathy; a sympathy which he counted on so much.

It was during the Hijaz days that Major Young gratefully acknowledged the efforts of Nuri al Sa'id in alleviating the Iraqi officers' resentment towards their British counterparts.¹ In May 1920 Nuri was in London. By

1. H. Young, op. cit., pp.197-8

that time the Iraqi officers had become very vigorous against the British.

Yet Nuri sent the following telegram to his fellow nationalists:

'"During my stay in London I became convinced that Britain, who liberated the Arab countries, remains sympathetic to the Iraqi cause and within a few weeks the question will be settled in the Peace Conference according to the wishes of the people by the institution of, at all events, National Government.' You may acquaint the public for expressions of gratitude to the British Government'.¹

Far from being pleased, Wilson angrily wired to the India Office urging:

'... the inadvisability of making any communications in London to Nuri Pasha with regard to Mesopotamia. He in no sense represents Mesopotamian interests'.²

On the 1st September 1920 (during the uprising), Nuri, for the second time, placed himself 'At the disposal of the High Commissioner' and, 'awaited' instructions to proceed 'to Iraq'.³ However, Nuri, whose first offer of help was rejected,⁴ complained: 'I cannot see how I can perform services you mention while I am cut off from my country'.⁵

Nuri was not alone in his attempts. Thābit 'Abd al Nur,⁶ claiming that he was acting on behalf of al 'Ahd society, sent an informal suggestion to the Foreign Office to the effect 'that the society would prove valuable help to us the British in pacifying Mesopotamia'.⁷ The British Authorities in Iraq, even in such crucial moments, rejected such an offer.⁸

It is evident that Wilson had seen these offers, not as friendly gestures of assistance, but as 'blackmail':

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1. FO.371/5226/E4539. From C.C. Baghdad, 5th May 1920 to I.O. Nuri's telegram was dated London, 1st May 1920.
 2. Ibid.
 3. FO.371/5228/E10766. From Nuri al Sa'id to I.O. dated 1st September 1920.
 4. FO.371/5129/E6324. From C.C. Baghdad to Cairo, repeated to I.O. dated 8th June 1920. No.6806. 'I regret that I cannot agree to Nuri Pasha visiting Baghdad.
 5. Nuri al Sa'id to I.O.
 6. Thābit 'Abd al Nur, a Christian from Mosul, studied in Constantinople, joined al 'Ahd in 1913 and was active during al Maşri trial, fought in the Hijaz, son of a big landowner.
 7. FO.371/5231/E12820. From S of S. of I.O. to H.C. Baghdad, dated 13th October, 1920
 8. FO.371/5231/E13292. From H.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 22nd October 1920. No.12708.

'... the present situation on the Euphrates is in no small degree due to the fact that these gentlemen /Iraqi officers/ wish to draw the attention of the British Government to themselves in the hope that to quieten the present situation the British will offer them good posts under the Iraqi administration'.¹

Gertrude Bell was of a different opinion:

'One bright spot is a telegram from Allenby urging that we should let Ja'far Pasha come over ... to have Ja'far here hand in glove with us, as he will be at any rate, will knock the bottom out of the anti-British propaganda to which Faisal has always been opposed. He /Ja'far/ has been writing to me all the winter asking if he may come back but A.T. /Wilson/ would not let me give him any encouragement'.²

It is significant that Miss Bell did not bear similar love for Yāsīn al Hāshimī. Even as late as November 1920 she explicitly stated her opposition to his return to Iraq.³ Yāsīn was, as early as 1915, identified by the British intelligence 'to be the chief member /of al 'Ahd/.⁴ During 1916-1918 he not only refused to join the Hijaz movement, but was also reluctant to exploit the opportunity of being Chief of Staff of the Ottoman troops stationed in Syria.⁵ In late 1918, Yāsīn was appointed, by Faisal, as Chief of Staff of the Arab army. Ja'far's substitution by Yāsīn must have made the former envious and sparked off a personal rivalry.⁶ However, such an appointment did not make Yāsīn less sceptical about the British. In early 1919, they described him as being 'Capable, good soldier, intelligent, ambitious, fanatical, supporter of complete independence. Potentially dangerous'.⁷ In late 1919, Wilson complained to the India Office that Nāji Suwaīdi and Yāsīn were actively working for the establishment of an Arab Government and against Ja'far 'on pro-Turkish lines'.⁸ In August 1919, the British General Headquarters suggested to the War Office that 'It is desirable for political reasons to get Yāsīn Pasha ... out of

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1. F.O.371/5129/E5005. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 27th March 1920, No.10722.
 2. G. Bell letters and papers, Newcastle, letter dated 4th July 1920.
 3. Ibid., letter dated 29th November 1920.
 4. F.O.882/13/MIS/15/13.
 5. G. Antonius, op. cit., p.156
 6. F.O.371/6350/116/3824. Mesopotamia Intelligence Report No.6, 31st January 1921.
 7. F.O.882/24/SY/19/7. 'Who is Who' in Damascus (1919).
 8. F.O.882/23/MES/20/1. 24th December 1919, No.15508.

Syria'.¹ During November and December 1919, Yāsīn's activities had finally exhausted British patience.² Thus in late December, he was arrested and exiled to a house arrest in Palestine and could not return to Syria until May 1920.³

Ja'far transferred the conflict into a new phase by actually inciting the British against his Arab comrades. Ja'far advised the British to deny Mawlud Mukhlis and al Hāshimi permission to return to Iraq because of their 'harmful influence'.⁴

It is evident that Ja'far and Nuri remained faithful to the idea of establishing an Arab administration. However their vision was influenced by the convictions that such an aim could only be gained through the consenting approval of the British themselves. Furthermore they viewed Britain as the major ally of the Arab cause. Without British assistance, Arab independence was impracticable. The Arabs alone lacked the ability to seize independence or to carry its further burdens. Ja'far argued that 'our only hope was /British/ support', and it was 'madness' to alienate 'the sympathies of the English'.⁵ He summed up the inclinations existing amongst Iraqi nationalists:

'... a few youthful extremists think that they can run the country without foreign help and are against any mandate at all, but the remainder are ready to accept mandate provided that /British/ intentions in regard to Arab state are sincere.'⁶

When Miss Bell assured Ja'far that 'complete independence was what /Britain/ ultimately wish to give', Ja'far replied 'My Lady, complete Independence is never given it is always taken'. Ja'far explained to Miss Bell that the Iraqis were in fact unable to achieve independence and thus his amazing conclusion was 'Complete

1. F.O.371/4235/120164. 21st August 1919, No.2627.

2. In November, the British decided to withdraw their troops from parts of Syria. It was believed that British forces were to be replaced by French troops. Yāsīn foiled such an attempt by threatening armed opposition. S. al Husri, Yum Maiysaloun, op. cit., pp.110-115. The British also saw Yasin's hand behind the attack on Dair al Zor. See coming discussion.

3. Ibid.

4. F.O.371/6350/116/3824. Mesopotamia Intelligence Report No. 6.

5. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, Newcastle, letter dated 27th November 1920

6. F.O.371/5229/E10858. From P. Cox to S.S. for India. 2nd September 1920.

Independence is impossible'.¹

Faisal, in a telegram to his father, clearly and systematically revealed the moderates' point of view:

'... Unity and independence are the objects of all of us ... But ... owing to the withdrawal of America and to the last Anglo-French agreement which does not acknowledge any covenant concluded between them and the Arabs. Your slave's position therefore necessitates our opposition to both these allies if we want to obtain our object soon, and also means compelling the nation to rely on her own finance and armaments which is at present very difficult. My political plan is the same as Yours, but peaceful ...'.²

In an interview with Miss Bell, Faisal disclosed the essence of his political outlook:

'This is how I viewed the Arab question ... Whatever A.T. Wilson might do I was assured that the policy of your Government was to set up a National Government in the Iraq. I was content to wait...'.³

Faisal's assurance of British intentions was enhanced by his firm belief that British policy 'with regard to Arab aspirations was that they were inseparably connected with the Sharifian family'.⁴

However, this shrewd Arab politician was wiser than to put all of his eggs in the British basket alone. Since the days of Hijaz, Faisal protected and patronized the militants from the wrath of both his father and the British.⁵ During his short-lived Syrian era, Faisal gave tacit approval to nationalists' militant activities against the British in Iraq. But in front of the British authorities, Faisal paused like a new Pontius Pilate declaring his innocence and claiming lack of control over his furious followers. Faisal's personality and prestige aided him in maintaining such a policy. However, Ja'far and Nuri were unable to keep their balance on such a thin rope.

1. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, (Newcastle)

It is important to note that the synopsis of this same letter which appears in the published work, Letters of Gertrude Bell, op. cit., Vol. II p.569, is misleading. Reference to the original copy of the letter, op. cit. would alter Ja'far's opinions considerably.

2. F.O.371/5216/E2896. Telegram from Faisal to King, dated 24th February 1920. Italics mine.

3. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, (Newcastle). Appendix No.1

4. Ibid.

5. Faisal was behind the return of 'Ali Jawdat and the release and re-appointment of Mawlud. He appointed Yasin as C. in C. while in Syria.

Ja'far himself confessed to the British Authorities that:

'... he had done all he could to bring extremists to reason but without success ... He is certain that he is now looked upon as thoroughly pro-British by the advanced Nationalists and that his counsels are therefore discounted'.¹

Nuri was no better than Ja'far inasfar as the confidence of the nationalists was concerned. During the uprising an Iraqi 'revolutionary' paper published a message from the 'Iraqi Conference' in Damascus to the leaders of the independence movement in Iraq: The message was warning against Nuri's plans, describing him as a British agent and calling on the Iraqi leaders to undermine his efforts.²

This leaves no doubt that, thanks to the Wilsonian policies, the moderate element among the nationalists was losing ground to the more militant sections of the movement. This could be explained by the long uncertainty which engulfed the political future of Iraq, and also by certain steps which the Civil Commissioner had assumed towards the officers.

(b) Deterioration in Anglo-Nationalists relations

In the previous pages, it was noted that certain Iraqis had given considerable concessions to the British in regard to Arab nationalist aims. This does not exculpate the British of the responsibility of failing to meet their promises which were given to the Arabs during the War. On the 5th January 1918, Britain's Prime Minister made an open statement on Britain's war-aims, in which he argued that 'Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine are, in our judgement, entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions'.³ On the 8th October 1918, the Anglo-French declaration, with its optimistic promises, was made public.

However, the British Authorities in Iraq were more than reluctant to take

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1. F.O.371/6350/116/3824. Mesopotamia Intelligence Report No.6. 31st January, 1921.
 2. Al Furāt, No.2, 28th al Qu'da 1338 (July-August 1920). The letter was dated 29th June 1920.
 3. D. Lloyd George, Memories of Peace, op. cit., Vol.2, p.464

any helpful steps in that promised direction.¹ Faisal, who was aware of the alarming mood of his Iraqi officers, wrote to the British Authorities (to Lord Allenby) stating his perplexity over developments in Iraq which were 'to turn away the affection of the people' from Britain. He pointed out that Iraqi nationalists:

'Are well aware that it is not possible for Mesopotamia to stand alone, but they feel very strongly the need of despatch in the constitution of a national government which shall clear the ground for the natives, so that they may show their capacity - relying at the same time on the assistance, advice and sympathy of Great Britain'.²

In an obvious reference to Wilson and his like, Faisal argued:

'To those who maintained that it is impossible to constitute such a government owing to the lack of trained men, I will say that until now not the smallest effort has been made to collect them'.³

Faisal concluded his letter by arguing:

'It is probable that it is not possible for G.B. to change the government until the peace conference has decided the question of the "Mandate" and in this connection I do not see anything to prevent the British authorities from discussing with the Arab leaders in Mesopotamia the definition of the Constitution which is to be formed as soon as the final decision is made. This ... would dissipate all doubts in their minds as to the intentions of Great Britain'.⁴

The British response to Faisal's letter was not positive. Wilson, as early as February 1919, was complaining of 'Sherifian' activities in Iraqi affairs.⁵ A few days after Faisal's letter, Clayton received the following telegram from Lord Curzon:

'Faisal's propaganda for complete independence of Arabia has spread into Mesopotamia, and is causing considerable apprehension in Baghdad and here. It is feared by the India Office, that agitation may be deriving

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1. Questions of the following type were asked in the British House of Commons: 'Did not General Sir Stanley Maude, in March 1917, tell the Arabs that the British came there as liberators and not as conquerors, and who is responsible for all this delay in setting up the Arab State?' The Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, Vol. 132, (HMSO 1920). Question to the P.M. from Mr. Lambert, 26th July 1920, p. 960.
 2. F.O.882/23/MES/19/9 dated June, 1919.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. F.O.882/23/MES/19/8. From C.C. Baghdad to the Director of Arab Bureau, Cairo, dated 23rd February 1919.

'encouragement from British Officers in Syria, acting under the mistaken belief that aspires for the immediate establishment in Mesopotamia, of an uncontrolled Arab Government enjoying support of /H.M.G./'. Instructions to discourage movement by all means in their power, should be given by you to responsible British Officers'.¹

Curzon's telegram might well have been motivated by a letter which he had received from Hirtzel, who was complaining of 'Lawrence's malign influence'.²

In June 1919, some Iraqi officers raised a memorandum running on similar lines to Faisal's letter.³ Lord Curzon suggested:

'... to inform them that the objections inherent in any crystallisation of Western bureaucratic methods in Mesopotamia are fully realised by H.M.G.; that certain steps, namely the formation of provincial and divisional Councils, are already being taken to ensure such a measure of Arab participation ... and that if and when a British mandate is decided upon for Mesopotamia a British commission will proceed to that country at the earliest possible date to discuss, in close consultation with all classes of people, what form the future Government should take'.⁴

However, and at the suggestion of the India Office, the following reply was sent to the Iraqi officers:

'... pending the decision of the Peace Conference as to the mandatory power and nature of the mandate it would be premature to attempt constitutional experiment. His Majesty's Government have no desire to prejudice that decision ... certain steps such as the formulation of provincial and divisional councils are being taken⁵ ... Recent appointment of Naji Beg /al Suwaïdi/ to high administrative office in Baghdad, ... is an example of the desire of /H.M.G./ to offer Arabs of proved character and ability full scope for the exercise of their talents'.⁶

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1. F.O.371/4146/95058/142. Also: F.O.882/23/MES/19/11. From Curzon, Whitehall, London to Clayton Egyptforce. Dated 24th June 1919. No.20724. Italics mine, to stress: (a) Faisal made it clear that he was not for an 'immediate' or 'uncontrolled' Arab government; (b) Wilson was opposed to any form of an Arab government, even a 'controlled' one; (c) Curzon was somewhere between the nationalists and Wilson. However, being pressurized by the I.O. Curzon was more on Wilson's side than adopting a neutral stance.
 2. F.O.371/4149. Private letter from Hirtzel to Curzon, dated 24th June 1919.
 3. F.O.371/4149/91481. From Clayton to the S. of S. for F.O. dated 8th June 1919. It was signed by al 'Askari, Suwaïdi, Mukhlis and 'Ali Jawdat.
 4. F.O.371/5228/E9020. A summary of correspondence in regard to the political situation in Mesopotamia (by Major H. Young). F.O. No.91491 dated 8th July 1919.
 5. This point has been repeated twice. However this was not the case: On the 29th October 1919 Wilson informed the India Office that he had formed only four Divisional Councils (in Basrah, Kirkuk, Diwāniya and 'Amāra) and that 'It had not been found possible to form any other divisional Councils ... Provincial Councils had not yet been formed nor did /Wilson/ contemplate moving in the matter that year /1919/'. Ibid. No.148636.
 6. Ibid. No.110324.

Although there is some apparent similarity between the two statements, yet the profound differences between them are very clear indeed. In May 1919, Wilson was on a short visit to Damascus where an Iraqi delegation composed of Yāsīn al Hāshimi, Nuri al Sa'īd and Nāji al Suwaīdi met him to discuss the political future of Iraq. Gertrude Bell, who was present at the meeting, described it as a 'turning point'.

'They laid before him their views as to the future of Mesopotamia - quite reasonable views, well within the programme we are now /January 1921/ following; and he told them brutally that it was all moonshine, that they must work on municipal councils before they could hope to take command ... they were at that time /May 1919/ running the whole military and civil administration in Syria ... it was preposterous to tell these Major-Generals and trained administrators that they must be content to run municipal councils. From that day they despaired of ever getting native institutions in Mesopotamia, and Yasin being the violent, active creature that he was, urged on the Mesopotamian League, of which he was the leading spirit, to the intensified anti-British propaganda it from that day adopted ... And it was because he /Wilson/ outraged nationalist feeling, under-estimated the strength of it and wholly misunderstood it that A.T. Wilson stands convicted of one of the greatest errors of policy which we have committed in Asia - an error so great that it now lies on the toss of a half-penny whether we can retrieve it'.¹

It is obvious that this account leads to the victimization of Wilson as a scape-goat for British policy. However, it is evident that Gertrude Bell had indirectly, as early as November 1919, recorded her disagreement with Wilson's line. Wilson made no attempt to hide his differences even with the higher British Authorities. On the 15th November Wilson despatched a telegram commenting on an enclosed note by Miss Bell on her impressions in Syria:

'The fundamental assumption throughout this note and, I should add, throughout recent official correspondence which has reached me from London, is that an Arab State in Mesopotamia and elsewhere within a short period of years is a possibility. My observations in this country and elsewhere have forced me to the conviction that this assumption is erroneous and ... I am aware that in holding this view I differ from authorities and observers both at home and abroad'.²

Major Young commented on Wilson's despatch:

'There was no reason to assume ... that ... Wilson had in any way modified his view that direct British Administration was necessary for Mesopotamia and it was clearly impossible for constitutional proposals to be made to him so long as he held these views'.³

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1. Gertrude Bell, Private Letters and Papers, Newcastle, letter dated 30th January 1921.
 2. F.O.371/5228/E9020. A summary of correspondence in regard to the political situation in Mesopotamia (by Major H. Young). No.172818. *Appendix (X)*

(c) The problem of Iraqi officers' return to Iraq

It was natural, once the War was over, that Iraqi officers were eager to return to their home country. Since the days of Hijaz, the conflict between Iraqi and Syrian officers was very apparent. Such hostility was simply and clearly a regionally motivated quarrel over senior posts in the Arab army.¹ Such a regional rivalry was intensified after the 'liberation' of Syria and the establishment of an Arab government. This process was concluded by the split of al 'Ahd into distinct groups; an Iraqi 'Ahd and a Syrian 'Ahd.² Faisal was embarrassed at such a development. Thus he was to encourage the Iraqis to return to Iraq with or without Wilson's approval.

Lord Curzon gave the following balanced account of the issue:

'... it is impracticable to postpone a decision regarding the return of these officers. They have been away from their homes for some time fighting the Turk; and His Lordship /Curzon/ would deprecate any appearance on the part of /H.M.G./ of putting obstacles in the way of the return to their native country of men who had volunteered for service in the allied cause and have been of assistance to the allied operations in Syria'.³

Furthermore, it is evident that the Iraq administration was in great need of the Iraqi officers who were, to put it in Miss Bell's terms, 'trained administrators'. In March 1920, Wilson sent a long telegram to the India Office complaining about the small size of his administration and its consequent inability to cope with Iraqi problems: 'The resulting state of affairs in this country is in the highest degree dangerous. It is destructive of public confidence and it is placing a burden upon the remaining Officers of this Administration which is heavier than they can bear'.⁴

In April 1920, Wilson in a more precise telegram, claimed that:

'The country therefore at the present time is almost devoid of natives who have had previous administrative experience of any

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1. Amin Sa'id, Asrār ..., op. cit., pp.239-243; also Lord Birdwood, op. cit., pp.108-9.
 2. al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.36, 79-80, 99-100.
 3. F.O.371/4146/86170/142. A minute by Louis Mallet, summing up the views of Lord Curzon. Dated 16th June 1919.
 4. F.O.882/23/MES/20/1 dated 10th March 1920. No.3494

'value ... the present Administration have had the greatest difficulty in finding Muhammadans competent to fill even the lower administrative appointments'.¹

According to the above-mentioned facts, one would have assumed that the ground for the return of the Iraqi officers was fully prepared. It was in early May 1919 that Faisal asked Lawrence to arrange for the homeward journey of his Iraqi officers. Lawrence replied:

'H.M.G. agree to your officers going to Mesopotamia, where they may say what they may like so long as it is not contrary to police regulations'.²

A week later, Lawrence informed the Foreign Office of Faisal's request and briefed them with the following information:

'These men are mostly convinced that Abdulla should become Emir of Baghdad, and will inevitably say so on their return. Faisal will not, of course, send with them, or make any expressions of, his own opinion on the matter ... they are officers who have served us very well and are mostly very Pro-British ... I need hardly say that they all expect and want a British Mandate in Mesopotamia'.³

The India Office, who resented Lawrence's conduct, hurried to telegraph the Foreign Office drawing their attention to the 'effect of Colonel Lawrence's message authorising Baghdadi officers to "say what they like" on their return to Mesopotamia, will naturally be to encourage their propagandist zeal ...'.⁴ Furthermore, the India Office stated its position in regard to the issue in question in the following way:

'Mr. Montagu would urge that explicit instructions should be furnished by telegraph to the British Authorities at Cairo to the effect that no person in the Sherifian service, whether of Baghdadi extraction or not, should be permitted to proceed to Mesopotamia without the prior concurrence of the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad'.⁵

It was unfortunate that Lord Curzon, in spite of his sympathetic outlook, was to agree to such reservations by the India Office,⁶ and that subsequently

1. F.O.371/5226/4811. to S. of S. for India, dated 26th April 1920, No.5111.

2. F.O.371/4145/79634/142, dated July 1920.

3. F.O.371/4146/86170/142, dated 22nd May 1919.

4. F.O.371/4145/79623/142, dated 26th May 1919.

5. Ibid.

6. F.O.371/4146/86170/142. Summary of Curzon's views, dated 16th June 1919

the Foreign Office was to instruct Clayton accordingly.¹ This reservation was, in practice, to be translated that no Iraqi officer should be permitted to proceed to Iraq at all; Wilson was of the opinion that:

'Individuals like Jaafar Pasha, Maulud, Nouri Said and others have written to their friends and relatives in Baghdad ... they are coming to Baghdad before long to prosecute a political campaign in favour of an Arab Government ... they have already sent a number of representatives who are conducting active secret propaganda on these lines, but with strong anti-foreign bias ... recommend ... to inform them and others of the same colour that they cannot be permitted at present to return to this country'.²

The appointment of Nāji Suwaīdi³ was considered as a gesture of good intentions by the British. In fact such an appointment and its subsequent failure was a further cause for the deterioration in the nationalists-British relations.

The appointment of Nāji was an exceptional deed rather than part of Wilson's consistent policy. It encourages the assumption that Wilson was attempting a reward for the evidently anti-Turk, wealthy and influential family of al Suwaīdi. However such calculations were not accurate: Nāji, who took up his job (Adviser to the Military Governor) on the 3rd July 1919, tendered his resignation on the 14th of the same month. A few days later he left Iraq for Syria.⁴ Nāji stated that he believed that he had been asked to come to Baghdad to assist and advise in setting up a national Government. On discovering his mistake, he resigned.⁵

These two incidents were a real blow to the Iraqi officers in general and to their moderate elements in particular. 'This deprivation of the privilege of sharing the defence and administration of their country'⁶ was bound to nourish the notion that 'A Mesopotamia free from British control seemed alone

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1. Ibid., from F.O. to General Clayton (Cairo), dated 13th June 1919, No.195
 2. F.O.371/4145/79634/142. Baghdad to I.O. Repeated to H.C. Cairo, 14th May 1919
 3. Nāji al Suwaīdi (1883-1945). Son of Yusif. Studied in Baghdad and graduated from the law college in Constantinople. Did not join the Hijaz movement. After 1918, worked under Ja'far in Aleppo. Since his days in Constantinople he became an active Arab nationalist.
 4. Cmd. 1061, op.cit., p.131
 5. P.W. Ireland, op. cit., p.190, footnote 2.
 6. The Times, 23rd July 1920. An article by Lawrence.

to offer them hope of office.'¹ Apart from Lawrence's and Bell's² opinions, Wilson's conduct was causing anxiety even among those who shared some of his views. Only two days after the resignation of Nāji, Wilson received another advisory letter from Hirtzel, in which the following passages had appeared:

'As regards Arab nationalism I think you will soon find yourself in pretty deep waters and, to be frank, I do not think you are going the right way to work with it ... You appear to be trying impossibly to turn the tide instead of guiding it ... You are going to have an Arab state whether you like it or not, whether Mesopotamia wants it or not ... There is no getting out of it and it is much wiser to face the fact. Moreover, you are going to have a lot of people in Mesopotamia whose heads will be full of absurd ideas from Syria and Heaven knows where, and room and use must be found for them, and when you've got them, you must not let them resign. Otherwise we shall have another Egypt on our hands. All these things are going to be contrary to our most cherished hopes, and nothing that you or I can say or do will alter them ... the idea of Mesopotamia as the model of an efficiently administered British dependency or protectorate is dead ... We must adapt ourselves and our methods to the new order of ideas and find a different way of getting what we want'.³

It seems that by late 1919 the militant trend had dominated the officers' movement. After her visit to Syria, Miss Bell reported that:

'Yasin is the moving spirit of the 'Ahd al Iraqi ... of whom there are about 300 in Faisal's service. With the exception of ... Suwaidi and ... Shawi, I know of none who belong to one of our influential families ... The League is working ... for Arab independence without foreign control ... Some of its more moderate adherents may not be in full accord with its policy, but I doubt whether their views ... would carry much weight ... the extremists are convinced that ... under a British mandate no attempt will be made to set up responsible Arab Government ... the more moderate members ... are equally certain that grave discontent exists among all the classes in the 'Iraq ...'.⁴

The Civil Commissioner commented:

'... the creation of an Arab Government on the lines advocated by Yasin ... and Naji ... /vis/ inconsistent with ... effective control of any sort. For some years to come the appointment of Arab ... officials except of an advisory capacity would involve the rapid decay of authority, law and order ...'.⁵

1. Cmd.1061, op. cit., p.138.

2. G. Bell wrote 'The problem which they /Iraqi officers/ presented might have been partly solved if a native army, in which they could have found employment, could have been set on foot irrespective of the long-delayed peace with Turkey and the granting of the mandate, as had occurred in quite different circumstances in Syria.'. Cmd. 1061, op. cit., p.139.

3. A letter from Hirtzel to Wilson, dated 16th July 1919. Cited by John Marlowe, op. cit., p.165. Italics mine.

4. Sudan Archives, Durham University, School of Oriental Studies, Box 303. Memo 'Syria in 1919', by G. Bell, 15th November 1919.

5. F.O.882/24/SY/19. No.34436/75/19. 15th November 1919.

(d) The Iraqi Conference of March 1920

When al 'Ahd split into distinct Syrian and Iraqi groups, the Iraqi 'Ahd, in early 1918, adopted the following aims:

'(a) the complete independence of Iraq within the framework of Arab unity.

'(b) Iraq is to be free to choose any of the advanced nations to assist in his economic and technical needs without any prejudice to his independence ...'¹

However, al 'Ahd 'central committee' used its constitutional authority² to amend paragraph (b) of the first chapter into: 'Great Britain is to supply Iraq with economic and technical aid ...'.³

Such an alteration was introduced in an obvious attempt to reconcile 'Ahd's aims with some of the British intentions. It reflected the views of the moderates. However, it is worth observing that such an amendment was a reflection of the 'central committee' of al 'Ahd rather than its 'general assembly'. Furthermore this amendment was to produce a new and profound split in the ranks of the Iraqi nationalists.⁴

A new development in the attitude of al 'Ahd occurred in mid-1919 and was revealed during the discussions conducted by some 'Ahd members with the King-Crane Commission. On the 20th March 1919, a decision was taken by the Four Powers to despatch an inter-Allied Commission to Mesopotamia and the Levant to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants with regard to the application of Mandatory system.⁵ On the 27th August the Commission concluded its enquiries and in Lord Birdwood's words, 'they recommended everything which was subsequently refused'.⁶

Although the Commission was prevented from becoming acquainted with the Iraqi views on the spot, yet it held several meetings with some 'Ahd members

1. al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.100-101.

2. The 'central committee' was the leading committee of al 'Ahd. It was given the right of amending the programme. Chapter (6), Articles 42 and 43. Ibid., p.110.

3. Ibid., p.114.

4. Infra, p.332.

5. R.S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, Vol.III, (Heinemann, 1922), pp.1-19.

6. Lord Birdwood, op. cit., p.106, Footnote 1.

in Damascus and Aleppo. The Iraqis in Syria forwarded a statement to the Commission in which the following demand was made: 'After the recognition of independence, technical and economic aid is to be asked for from U.S.A.'.¹

Faisal's long hesitation not to provoke the Allies was finally overcome by mounting nationalist pressure. Thus the 7th March 1920 was set up to be the day of an elected Syrian National Conference to declare independence and Faisal's monarchy.

The Iraqis (in Syria) hardly needed any encouragement to plan a similar action. However, Iraqi nationalists were also motivated by the need to gain the form of a representative body so as to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the British. Furthermore, the Iraqi nationalists were urged by Faisal himself into a similar conference for reasons which are going to be shown later. Thus a preliminary meeting of the Iraqi community was held in Nuri's house in Damascus, and representatives to the conference were elected. In addition to that some other Iraqis arrived from Baghdad to participate in the Conference which was held on the 7th March 1920.² The Conference was concluded with a signed proclamation declaring the independence of Iraq, 'Abd Allah as king of it and that Iraq and Syria were to be federated.

The British official reaction to the Conference and its results was one of blunt rejection. Although such a reply was expected, yet, even from a British point of view, it was not fully justified. One says that, bearing in mind that the British decision-makers had in early 1919 discussed the possibility of having 'Abd Allah as Amir of Iraq, and had in fact reached a positive conclusion.

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1. A. al Fayyad, op. cit., p.156. For a detailed account of the 'Commission', see: Harry N. Howard, The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East, (Beirut, 1963).
 2. It was attended by the following personalities: from Baghdad - Major-General Ja'far al 'Askari; Colonel Sa'id al Shaikhly; Major Tahsin 'Ali; Major Isma'il Namiq; Major Sami al Orfail; Captain Faraj 'Umarah, Naji and Tawfiq al Suwaidi; Yunis Wahbi; Hamid Sadr al Din; Ahmed Rafiq; Nuri al Qadi (Lawyers); Rashid al Hashimi; Subhi Najib; Ridā al Shabibi; Muḥmoud Adib (Writers); 'Azzat al Karkhi (ex-administrator); 'Abd al Latif al Falahi; Tawfiq al Hashimi; Muḥammad Bassam (Small Merchants). From Mosul: Colonel 'Ali Jawdat; Colonel 'Abd Allah al Dulaimi; Colonel Jamil al Madfa'i; Maki al Sharbiti; Abrahim Tawhala; Thabit 'Abd al Nur (Lawyers); Asa'd Sahib; Haj Muḥammad Khairi (Small Merchants). Other members of the conference who could not attend were: Brig-General Nuri Sa'id; Lieut-Colonel Isma'il al Saffar; Colonel Rashid al Khoja and Faiq 'Abd Allah.

On the 23rd January 1919, Balfour personally telegraphed the High Commissioner of Egypt informing him that:

'Amongst alternative schemes for Administration of Mesopotamia /H.M.G./ will have to consider Sherif Abdullah as possible titular Emir and they would be glad of your opinion and of opinions of any Officer having first hand knowledge of Abdullah's character regarding his suitability. You will understand what is wanted in a king who will be content to reign but not to govern and whose Religious views are such that Shiah's may acquiesce his rule'.¹

Three days later the Foreign Office informed the High Commissioner of Egypt, 'owing to religious divisions, the Political Officer at Baghdad had reported growing hostility to a Sherifian or indeed ... to any single Arab head of state at all ...'.²

The High Commissioner distributed these telegrams to the British Officials in the area and requested their opinions. On the 28th January the Political Resident at Jeddah cabled Cairo stating his approval and pointing out that 'Abd Allāh 'has special sympathy with the Shia sect, and in matters of religion is broadminded'.³

Cornwallis wired from Damascus supporting the nomination.⁴ Hogarth concluded that 'Abd Allah: '... would make a presentable titular ruler ... Failing him I see no possible outstanding Arab for Mesopotamia ...'. Storrs argued that 'Abdalla is in many ways eminently qualified to be titular Emir of an Arab State'.⁵

Thus the High Commissioner of Egypt replied to the Foreign Office informing them of the above-mentioned views which were given by British Officials who 'have first hand acquaintance with Abdullah'.⁶ The High Commissioner went on to state that 'Abd Allah's 'reputation for religious and Islamic learning is considered as good as his father's'. Four days later he again telegraphed the Foreign Office and in an obvious reply to the views of the Civil Commissioner

1. F.O.141/444, dated 23rd January 1919, No.1.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. From Wilson, Jedāh to Arbur, Cairo, dated 28th January 1919.

4. Ibid. From Briton, Damascus to Arbur, Cairo, dated 29th January 1919.

5. Ibid. From R. Storrs, Brig-General to the Residency, Cairo.

6. Ibid. From H.C. Cairo to F.O., dated 30th January 1919, No.163

of Baghdad, he stated that Storrs 'thinks that leading Shi'ah may have modified their feeling now'.¹

Nuri al Sa'id² did not attend the Conference, due to his absence in London. However, he seized the chance of meeting his old friend, Major Young,³ and forwarded to him a long letter explaining the formation and purpose of the Conference.⁴ Nuri assured Young that among all those who attended the Conference '... there is not one who holds any unfriendly views of our allies, the British ... On the contrary they are one and all imbued with the spirit of comradeship with the British and are most anxious to continue on the path of loyalty and collaboration with them'.⁵ However, Nuri pointed out the deep national sentiment existing in Iraq.⁶

Perhaps one is allowed here a moderate diversion from the issue of the Iraqi Conference to Nuri's observations concerning the 'defects' of the British Administration and the aspirations of Iraqi nationalists. Such views are by no means divorced from the general issue, but are rather quite helpful in comprehending the political background from which the 'Conference' emerged. In a supplement to his statement, Nuri argued that:

'there is a general belief among the intelligent observers in Irak that the local administration is pursuing ... a policy at variance with the well-known intentions of the British Government ... and the following points may be cited in further evidence:

- 1st. In Mosul and Baghdad no Arab flags were allowed to be flown or used in processions ...
- 2nd. All communications between Irak and Syria are repressed. Arab newspapers are prohibited from entering the country ...
- 3rd. Irakian Officers ... are not permitted to enter Irak ...
- 4th. The Military Administration forbids the formation of any organisation for discussing the political future of the country or its social needs.'

1. Ibid., From H.C. Cairo to F.O., dated 3rd February 1919, No.180.

2. Nuri al Sa'id (1888-1958). From a humble Baghdadi family. Finished high school in 1903, graduated from the Military Academy in 1906. Met al Masri and was influenced by him during 1911 at the Staff College. Fled to Basrah after al Masri's arrest. His highly intelligent mind and 'reading of the signs of the times' he became convinced that 'the interests of his country to be in alignment with Great Britain'. This view allowed him to be the first man in Iraq for forty years.

3. Major H. Young was then serving with the Foreign Office.

4. See Appendix No.II

5. F.O.371/5226/E2719. Letter to Major Young from Nuri al Sa'id, 5th April 1920.

6. Ibid.

Nuri suggested that it was because of such repressive policies that a strong reaction, hostile to the British, was intensely growing in Iraqi circles. He pointed to the disillusionment of the Arab intelligentsia. 'They now find themselves confronted with the same difficulties and suffering, from the same disabilities of distrust and actual exile as obtained in the days of the Turks'.

Nuri concluded his supplement by saying:

'... I believe that with the installation of a National Administration of a permanent character tendencies for intrigue would subside, agitation cease and the usual pursuits of life totally occupy the minds of the people. The tribal chiefs among whom are many leaders of the National Movement will prove amenable to the native Officials familiar with their traditions.

The most essential thing for the people of Irak to know is, whether the British Government propose to render them assistance in the immediate formation of an independent National Government charged with full responsibility, for security of public peace and order; whether they are desirous of attracting to them and holding the sympathies of the inhabitants and furthering harmonious promotion of the common interest by acceding to their legitimate desires'.

Major Young was impressed by Nuri's argument and wrote 'I came away from my interview with Nuri more than ever convinced that an immediate change was required in the spirit of our administration in Mesopotamia ...'.²

Taking into account that the British had already established a rather favourable view to the suitability of 'Abd Allah as Amir of Iraq, and the apparently convincing assurances and explanations of Nuri al Sa'id, one would have assumed that the British would react mildly to the 'Iraqi Conference' and the decisions it produced. However, this was not the case.

On the 13th March 1920, the Foreign Office telegraphed the High Commissioner in Egypt instructing him that:

'Faisal should be informed at once that the right of Damascus Congress ... to settle future of Syria, Palestine, Mosul or Mesopotamia cannot be recognised by H.M.G.⁷. These countries were conquered from the Turks by the Allied Armies and their future which is now before the Peace Conference can only be determined by the Allied Powers acting in concert.

H.M.G.⁷ cannot in any case recognise the right of a self-constituted body at Damascus to regulate these matters and H.M.'s Government together with French Government are compelled to say that they regard these proceedings as null and void ...

You should renew invitation to Amir Faisal to return to Europe

1. F.O.371/5226/E3110. Supplement to Nuri al Sa'id's statement of 5th April 1920.

2. H. Young, op. cit., p.298

'and place his case before the Peace Conference'.¹

What was interesting, perhaps even alarming about this telegram lay not only in its 'unfriendly' tone and its denial of the Arab War efforts² but also in the more decisive turn in British policy. Furthermore, it had explicitly stated the British intention of coordinating policy with France. Nothing could have angered the Arab nationalists more than that.

King Hussein was able to grasp the alarming nature, outlined above, behind such a policy. On the 3rd April 1920, the Arab Bureau in Cairo telegraphed Vickery at Jeddah to the effect of the previously-mentioned telegram of the Foreign Office.³ Hussein's reply was quite indicative:

'... Please allow me to say that yours sincerely has no relation or connection with the Peace Conference.

My relation and engagements are, as I have pointed out many times before, solely with Great Britain. She called me, she made me revolt, and she accepted all my conditions with regard to the independence of the Arab Country and what concerns it, under the signature of the High Commissioner ...'⁴

Hussein informed the High Commissioner of his 'support for the Syrian and Mesopotamian Congress resolutions'.⁵ The High Commissioner despatched to the Foreign Office the content of Hussein's new letter in which Hussein 'appeals to us Britain not to support the opinions of those who hate British interests ... (the reference is of course to the French)'.⁶

Faisal wrote to Lord Curzon stating that 'all Arabs in Syria and Mesopotamia desire independence and unity'. But he assured Curzon that the Arabs 'wish to preserve their good relations with the Allies'. However, Faisal pointed out that he 'will reply to the invitation to come to Europe when H.M.G. declare privately, if not officially, recognition of Arab independence'.⁷

1. F.O.882/23/MES/20/1. The content of the above telegram was despatched to the C.C. Baghdad from S.S. for India, London. Dated 13th March 1920. No. Nil.

2. On Arab contribution to the War effort of Britain, see Lloyd George, Memoirs of Peace Conference, op. cit., Vol.II, p.667.

3. F.O.882/24/SY/20/7. From Arbur to Vickery, Jeddah, dated 3.4.1920. No.A.B.550.

4. F.O.882/23/MES/20/2. To the H.C. Cairo dated 9th April 1920, No.376.

5. F.O.882/24/SY/20/7. From H.C. Cairo to F.O. dated 27th March 1920.

6. Ibid.

7. F.O.371/5034. Text of letter from Faisal to Lord Curzon, dated 4th April, 1920.

The failure of the British Officials and the Arab nationalists to come to terms over the problems of the Iraqi Conference and its resolutions was beyond doubt an important factor in the breakdown of Arab nationalists' patience and the subsequent outbreak of violence in Iraq. One can hardly attribute high prudence to the British conduct who had dismissed the Iraqi Conference as a self-styled body of no representation. After all it was none other than Wilson who informed the higher authorities that:

'The /members of the I.C./ undoubtedly possess documents from certain parties and it will be found in practice that these documents emanate from the dissentient groups found in Mesopotamia ... viz the Persian Priesthood of Karbala, certain tribal leaders of the vicinity of Najaf and a small but influential group of Sunni politicians in Baghdad ... To this list may possibly be added a few leaders of tribes of Mosul Division ...'.¹

It is worth mentioning that, whereas Hussein's and Faisal's attitudes were rather firm and committed, one finds that 'abd Allah has assumed a different position:

'... I am not in touch with, nor am I aware of the various factors secret or public, of the present political situation, nor am I acquainted with the position of the Mesopotamian Congress, as to their authority or nature of their powers ...'.²

This statement could not have been the accurate truth because 'Abd Allah had written to the Conference expressing his gratitude for their offer.³

Years later, and in an interview with Gertrude Bell, Faisal revealed the following remarks which throw some light on the Iraqi Conference and Faisal's position vis-à-vis his family and the Arab nationalists.

'... Do you realise why it was that in March 1920 I encouraged the handful of Iraqis in Syria to nominate my brother Abdullah king of Iraq? I knew that the whole business was laughable, but I gave it my countenance in order to appease my own brother ... My task was to obliterate family dissensions and therefore I encouraged the nomination of ... 'Abd Allah to Iraq. I knew that it was absurd ...'.⁴

One could also suggest that Faisal's encouragement of the nomination of 'Abd Allah was motivated by another factor which he did not (could not) expose to Miss Bell, namely his rejection of getting trapped by the critical Iraqi

1. F.O.882/23/MES/20/1 to S.S. for India, dated 18th March 1920, No.3497. Also see A.T. Wilson, Clash of Loyalties, op. cit., p.237.

2. F.O.882/23/MES/20/4. To H.E. Vickery from Abdullah, dated 6th April 1920.

3. al 'Umari, op. cit., Vol.III, p.197.

4. Appendix No.1.

problem. Faisal was aware that the clash between the Iraqi nationalists and the British Administration was inevitable and embarrassing. To commit himself to the conflict he would have either lost nationalists sympathies or, alternatively, British support.

The British blunt rejection of the 'Iraqi Conference' and its decisions could be explained by three factors: (a) Wilson's authority over Iraq was not yet radically questioned by the higher British Officials; (b) the 'Iraqi Conference' had independently proclaimed 'Abd Allah as king of an independent Iraq, whereas the British favoured 'Abd Allah to be appointed by them and as a titular head; (c) the Iraqi decision coincided with a similar Syrian one and involved a plan for a federation with Syria; the British in loyalty to their French commitment could not afford to render their agreement.

CHAPTER VII

THE OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE, 1920

The Era of Violence

There has never been a Chinese Wall which separates politics from wars or violent actions.¹ Although violence is a continuation of politics, yet violence should be seen as a new phase in political development. The necessity of violence arises, one assumes, with the emergence of two conditions: the failure of 'ordinary' means and methods to fulfil the aims of one side or the other. And the conviction, real or imaginary, of either side that his military might is powerful enough to compel his opponent to yield to his wishes.

Thus the very nature of political violence necessitates political and human decisions. Decisions which might not be unanimously agreed upon due to differences concerning the estimation of the political situation. In this regard Iraq was no exception. The rise of political violence was to draw a further line between the militant and moderate elements of the officers' movement.

The British denunciation of the Iraqi Conference convinced some Iraqi officers of the futility of any political measures short of violent action. Wilson himself was to admit that 'there was, indeed, some justification for their views ...'.² Here, and in regard to violence, one should clearly distinguish between two stages. Prior to the Conference, the use of anti-British violence was actually practiced by some Iraqi officers, namely al Hashimi and Shallash. The attack on Dair took place on the 11th December 1919. However, this offensive was limited in its scope, opposed from within the nationalist camp, and confined to a tribal and restricted military character. After the Conference's failure, violent action had recruited the support of the majority

1. Clausewitz's classical definition considered violence or war as a 'mere continuation of policy by other means. We see, therefore, that war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means'.⁽ⁱ⁾ Clausewitz saw war as 'an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will'.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

(i) General Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, trans. to English by Col. J.J. Graham, 5th impression, Vol.1, (London, 1949), p.23.

(ii) Ibid., p.2.

2. A.T. Wilson, Clash of Loyalties, op. cit., p.237.

of Iraqi officers and assumed a more effective military and political nature. In this work, the emphasis will be on the political motives, attitudes, relations and consequences of such a rising trend.

(a) The Attack on Dair al Zor

On the 15th December, the al 'Arab newspaper informed the Iraqi public that a certain Ramaḍān Shallāsh had attacked Dair al Zor, imprisoned Arab and British officials, and that his action was not supported by the Arab Government but by Turkish officials.¹

At the date of the armistice the frontier between Syria and Iraq had not been defined. In the early days which followed the armistice, the British did not extend their authority to Dair. However, by the end of November 1918, the British sent a military officer to run Dair's affairs. The Arab Government at Damascus expressed its dissatisfaction and claimed that Dair should be administered from Damascus. However, no action was taken.

In February, and again in July, 1919, the British Administration received reports that Ramaḍān Shallāsh was charged by al 'Ahd to agitate Arab tribes in the area. This was but part of an al 'Ahd campaign inside Iraq to demand complete independence. He reached Raḡah early in December and began actively to intrigue among the tribes, styling himself Governor of the Euphrates and Khābur.² On the 11th December, Dair was entered by tribesmen led by Shallāsh. The British Officer in Dair, Captain Chamier, was put under house arrest and kept as a hostage. 'The Amir Faisal was in Paris, but on being told of the hostilities at Dair he sent a telegram to his brother and deputy at Damascus, the Amir Zaid, repudiating in the strongest terms the action of Ramadhan al Shallash and ordering the Arab officials to withdraw from Dair. He added that all who were responsible for what had occurred would be punished as rebels. This message was dropped in Dair by our British aeroplanes on 22nd December...'.³ 'On 21st December, two officers arrived from Aleppo, Rauf Beg al Kubaīsi and Taufiq Beg al Damalouji, Military Governor of Aleppo. Rauf ... brought a

1. al 'Arab, 15th December 1919, No.732.

2. Cmd. 1061, op. cit., p.134.

3. Ibid., p.135

letter from Ja'far to Captain Chamier ... In it Ja'far asked the British officer to consult with Rauf as to the best means of restoring order. Rauf informed Captain Chamier that he had instructions to dismiss Ramadhan from his post as Qaimmaqam of Raqqah and to send him under arrest to Aleppo'.¹ Damalouji met Wilson at Albu Kamāl and asked for British help to eject Ramaḍān. Wilson informed the Iraqi officer that the British Government decided to consider al Khābur as a provisional boundary between Syria and Iraq.² This decision meant that the British had recognized the Arab 'occupation' of Dair al Zor. On the 25th December Ramaḍān Shallāsh released all his British prisoners.

On the 12th January 1920, the Arab Government protested against the new boundaries and asked that Mayādīn and Albu Kamāl should be included in the Arab zone. Ramaḍān declared that the British must withdraw to the Hurān valley, some 50 miles below 'Ānah. He accelerated his incitement of the tribes against the British presence, won the allegiance of the 'Aqāīdāt and continued his raids against British garrisons in the area. By the end of January the Arab Government managed to replace Ramaḍān Shallāsh³ by Mawlud Mukhlis as a step of reconciliation towards the British.

Nevertheless, the threat to the British remained unchanged. Mawlud stepped up nationalist propaganda and military harassment. In the middle of February the tribesmen who were this time led by Iraqi officers, attacked and occupied Albu Kamāl, and the British lines of communication as far south as Qāīm were subjected to continuous raids. Meanwhile the British went on sending ultimatums which were not backed by actions. And Faisal kept on expressing to the British his apologies. On the 5th May 1920, the British gave a further concession by recognizing the Arab 'occupation' of Albu Kamāl.

This was considered by Iraqi officers as a sign of military weakness on the part of the British, and because the real aims of the Iraqis were political

1. Ibid., p.136

2. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., pp.233-4.

3. Ramaḍān Shallāsh, a former Mukhtār of Albu Sarrāi tribe near Dair al Zor. Graduated from 'the tribal school' in Constantinople. Was appointed as an officer in the Turkish army and while serving at Madina, he deserted the Turks and joined the Sharif.

rather than 'geographical'. The raids were carried on against the British installations, garrisons and line of communication. The officers managed to penetrate Iraq as deep as the line between Sāmarrā'-Shurqāt. The British received reports that Arab troops led by Iraqi officers were gathering forces and planned an attack in the Mosul district. The offensive took place in early June and was a serious acceleration in the sequence of political violence.

The picture, as given above, is a summary of an account accepted by most writers.¹ However, it suffers certain over-simplifications and lacks certain important details which were disclosed only recently.

(i) The British Attitude: the British had, basically, treated the problem as a border conflict. This in itself was a grave miscalculation. It is clear that the Iraqi officers have used the frontier question as a mere pretext to fulfil their political intentions of either forcing their way into Iraq or pressurizing the British Administration into political concessions. The British series of 'geographical concessions' had no impact whatsoever, save in exposing the British military weakness and thus undermining the British prestige in Iraq.

Apart from al Hāshimi's encouragement, Shallāsh had embarked on his 'adventure' rather single-handed. However, once he had scored his initial successes, other Iraqi officers were to follow suit. Violence paid off. The crux of the matter was that political reforms were in demand and not minor border rectifications. The British declined to initiate immediate political reforms, and at the opposite extreme, they were forced at gunpoint into a retreat policy concerning the frontier issue; a double-sided mistake which could have produced nothing less than an open invitation to an armed uprising.

Wilson argued that:

'Seizure of Dair-uz-Zor was the first step in campaign of penetration from Syria to Mesopotamia. Occupation of Albu Kamal, following on recent agreement, is the second step .. for last week our troops have daily been in action against well-organised raids. Occupation of Ana is the third step, and if made effectively by Arab Government would imperil our position at Mosul. There

1. Lieut-General Sir Aylmer Haldane, The Insurrection in Mesopotamia 1920, (Edinburgh, 1922), pp.33-44; also, Cmd. 1061, op. cit., pp.132-140; also A.T. Wilson, op. cit., pp.227-37.

'are indications that in near future we may be faced with a recrudescence of fanatical Pan-Arab activity ...'.¹

This might have been an accurate understanding of the nationalists' real intentions. However, Wilson dismissed any usefulness for political steps to calm down the rising tension. He argued that:

'An announcement of the constitution that we propose for this country unlikely to have any appreciable effect on this agitation; population led by extremists whose cry is complete independence, exclusive of any sort of foreign influence ... Further concession in a constitutional direction will not affect this issue.'²

Having discredited the value of political solutions, the only remaining remedy was the use of armed force to suppress this 'wave of anarchic energy which will swamp' the British presence in Iraq. This was exactly what Wilson had requested the British Government to make available to him.³ What is rather surprising is that Wilson was aware that the military tools at his disposal were in fact obsolete and 'that shortage of transport and troops, consequent on demobilization, made military operations at such a distance from our base at Baghdad almost impossible, and that in the event of any sort of trouble it would be impossible to maintain communication between Dair-ez-Zor and Baghdad or Mosul'.⁴

Within the framework of a military solution the only option left was the employment of the British Air Force to combat the Iraqi mobilization on the borders. On several occasions Wilson and Haldane had pressed for the use of such a weapon. However, the British higher authorities, for technical and political reasons, declined to allow them to turn to such methods. In early March 1920, the War Office restricted the use of air action against hostile Arabs to within Iraqi borders.⁵ In June, the British General Headquarters was clearly informed by the War Office that:

1. F.O.371/5073. To I.O., dated 15th May, 1920, No.5803.

2. Ibid, Italics mine.

3. Ibid.

4. A.T. Wilson, Clash of Loyalties, op. cit., p.234. Italics mine.

5. F.O.371/5128/E.1106. To G.H.Q. Baghdad, dated 6th March 1920, No. M.1.2.

'The India and the Foreign Office deprecate the bombing of Dar-ez-Zor and Jazireh-Ibn-Omar on political grounds. The Air Ministry has also been consulted and is of the opinion that for technical reasons it is out of the question to bomb Dar-ez-Zor effectively'.¹

Wilson went to the surprising extent of accepting military set-backs with their alarming consequences rather than attempting any political understanding. In May 1920, Faisal suggested to send Nuri al Sa'id to Baghdad to confer with Wilson regarding the situation on the frontiers;² Wilson replied with a refusal.³ Had Wilson been acting from a position of strength, then his attitude might have been understandable, but within a week of the above telegram, British troops had to suffer another setback by withdrawing from al Qāim to 'Anāh⁴ and orders for the evacuation of Zākho, Dahuk and 'Aqrah were already given.⁵

It is interesting to observe that whereas Wilson saw no alternative to the nationalist threat but the use of armed repression, one finds that the India Office had considered immediate political changes in Iraq as a better way out. In a memorandum to the Foreign Office, Arthur Hirtzel pointed out the highly alarming situation which was developing in Iraq. He suggested that the return of Sir Percy Cox as High Commissioner to Iraq in the Autumn of 1920 should be made known. Hirtzel went on to say:

'... As to the proposed constitutional changes, Mr. Montagu is apprehensive that it may no longer be safe to permit a decision to wait on the formulation of the Mandate by the League of Nations, which must involve considerable delay; and he would prefer to instruct Colonel Wilson to take forward action immediately ... Mr. Montagu would recommend the immediate creation of the President of Council, and a Council of State in Iraq, to be followed by the constitution of a Legislative Assembly as soon as an electoral law can be elaborated'.⁶

In his telegram Wilson requested more military aid and explicitly stated:

'... Further concession in a constitutional direction will not affect this

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1. F.O.371/5129/E.6543. From W.O. to G.O.C. Mesopotamia, dated 15th March 1920, No.85318.
 2. F.O.371/5128/E.1546. From General Headquarters, Cairo, to G.O.C. Mesopotamia, dated 8th March 1920, No.E.A.3008. Also F.O.371/5129/E.6323 dated 27th March 1920.
 3. F.O.371/5129/E.6342. From C.C. Baghdad to Cairo repeated to I.O., dated 8th June 1920, No.6806.
 4. F.O.371/5130/E.6798. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 14th June 1920, No.7174.
 5. F.O.371/5129/E.6439. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 9th June 1920, No.6950.
 6. F.O.371/5226/E.5113. From A. Hirtzel, I.O. London to the Under Secretary of State, F.O. London, dated 20th May 1920.

issue'. In the memorandum, not a single word was mentioned concerning military methods and its dominant argument was based on the imperativeness of constitutional announcements and changes. This leaves little doubt that Wilson's policy was in fact losing favour in the highest circles of the India Office.

(ii) The Arab Attitude and its impact on British Authorities: at the time of the events, the role played by Faisal, his Government and Iraqi officers was rather inconspicuous and a matter of dispute. The recent disclosure of documents and the passing of time enables one to give an account more proximate to the reality.

Once the World War was over, the Iraqi-Syrian border was considered as the weakest link in the British domination over Iraq and thus used as a centre of Iraqi nationalists activities. It was as early as February 1919 that the British Authorities in Iraq became aware of certain 'Sharifian' activities emanating from Syria and 'sowing the seed of future trouble by exciting a number of un-attainable ambitions'.¹ In the following month the British intercepted 'agitating' letters from 'Sharifian agents' to some Iraqis.²

However, the first armed attack on Dair which was a departure from mere political agitation was in fact exclusively planned by al Hāshimi and Shallāsh.³ At this stage, other Iraqi officers were not directly involved. It seems that the majority was still in favour of 'political' methods. But the period between December 1919 and May 1920 witnessed a radical change in the Iraqi officers' attitude in the direction of joining the armed struggle. This shift became very clear when, in March 1920, the overwhelming majority of the officers resigned their Syrian service and joined the 'Iraqi army' at the Syrian borders.⁴ Two factors were behind this change of attitude: British military weakness in Iraq was exposed and the dispute with the Civil Commissioner went on unsolved.

1. F.O.371/4144/17618, Extract from Arab Bulletin, February 1919.

2. F.O.371/4145/43823. From Political Baghdad to I.O. London, dated 14th March 1919, No.2943.

3. Appendix No.1; also 'Ali Jawdat, op. cit., p.94.

4. M. al Basīr, op. cit., p. 125

This brings into question the political relations among Iraqi Officers. When al Kubaīsi and al Damalouji arrived at Dair, they told Captain Chamier that they were opposed to Shallāsh's activities. And when Shallāsh was replaced by Mukhlis̄, the 'Ahd circles assured the British that a more 'reasonable' leader had replaced an 'extremist'. On the other hand, it is known that al Kubaīsi was, in fact, encouraging Shallāsh in his uncompromising attitude towards the British.¹ Furthermore, Mukhlis̄' policy was by no means less aggressive or violent against the British than that of his predecessor.

Such a confusion would be cleared if we comprehended the importance of two elements: personal rivalries, and dislike of Shallāsh's tribal and individualistic methods played a role in removing him from his post. Furthermore, in the early stages of the violent period, Iraqi officers were sympathetic to Shallāsh's methods, but at the same time apprehensive of the outcome of such a provocative policy towards the British. Subsequent developments were to sweep away all their hesitation and to involve them wholeheartedly into armed struggle.

The recently disclosed documents give a confirmation of the above-argued opinion. Mawlud was not 'fanatically' anti-British. Upon hearing that Sir Percy Cox was retiring he 'earnestly desired Col. Lawrence's appointment to some high or the highest post in Iraq'.² Yet his actual resentment of the British Administration's policies in Iraq was not radically different from 'extremists' like Shallāsh. When he replaced the latter, Wilson was not impressed, and informed the India Office that Mawlud 'far from adopting a different attitude, is also actively inciting tribes throughout Mesopotamia to active revolt and rebellion. His letters have reached tribes as far as Amara'.³

A month later, Mawlud informed Wilson that he would try to settle the frontier issue peacefully, 'but tribes can do what they please unless a definite promise is given that the British intend retiring'.⁴ In the meantime Mawlud

1. al Baṣīr, op. cit., p.121.

2. F.O.371/6348/105. From M. Palmer (Damascus) No.66 very confidential. To S. of S. for F.O. London, dated 30th April 1921.

3. F.O.371/5128/E.115. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O., dated 30th January 1920, No.1301.

4. F.O.371/5128/E.114. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O., dated 4th February 1920.

threatened the use of violence if the British advanced to Mayādīn.¹ Wilson, in late February, suggested to the India Office that 'the Arab Government should be induced to remove Maulud and replace him by a less headstrong personality'.² On the 12th March more agitating letters from Mawlud were intercepted by the British.³ On the 11th February General Haldane informed the War Office that 'Maulud is still threatening'.⁴ And he turned their attention to reports received 'of an assembly of Arab troops and tribesmen at Mayadin and Ramadhan Shallash moving from Damascus with reinforcements'.⁵ Late in March Wilson cabled the following interesting information:

'Ramadhan Shallash has never been arrested and is now back at Mayadin styling himself leader of Arab party with the connivance, if not with the active assistance of Maulud Pasha at Dair-ez-Zor, who is Faisal's own nominee'.⁶

Wilson was of the opinion that without the 'funds flowing' from Syria 'external hostile propaganda would be of little importance'.⁷ He pointed out that:

'There is a continual flow of money and propaganda, the latter employing the name of Abdullah as well as that of Faisal and the Syrian State, from Dair-ez-Zor into this country, and it is difficult to see where this can come from, especially the funds, if not from the Damascus Government or officials of that Government'.⁸

A month earlier, Wilson had bitterly complained to the India Office of the 'agitating' activities of 'our subsidised friends in Syria'.⁹ A year earlier the Foreign Office was provoked, at Wilson's persistence, to telegraph General Clayton informing him of the fears existing in the India Office circles that 'agitation may be deriving encouragement from British Officers in Syria'.¹⁰

1. Ibid.

2. F.O.371/5128/E.1393, dated 25th February 1920, No.2497

3. F.O.371/5129/E.1870. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. 12th March 1920, No.3264

4. F.O.371/5128/E.282. To W.O. dated 11th February 1920, No.X.8149.

5. Ibid.

6. F.O.371/5129/E.2577. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O., 24th March 1920, No.2699.

7. F.O.371/5130/E.7219. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. 18th June 1920, No.R.7392.

8. Ibid.

9. F.O.371/5074. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 18th May 1920, No.5954

10. F.O.371/4146/95058. 24th June 1919, No.207

Wilson's notions were perceptive and accurate. Nowadays it is clear that military operations were exclusively organized and led by Iraqi officers and followers of al 'Ahd.

However, what is at stake is not how the events are seen now as much as how they were understood at the time itself. The ordinary Iraqi did not differ from Wilson or Haldane in viewing the events as a daring defiance of British Authority and a serious encouragement to further mutiny. However, the British higher authorities were not in a position, perhaps did not want, to consider it in a similar way: the essence of such a position finds its roots in the assumption that Iraqi officers' hostility to 'British' policies was not necessarily a radical threat to the British strategic presence in the area. In other words, Wilson's plans were not the sole British alternative. Furthermore, it was evident that Iraqi officers were available for the support of a different alternative which, while it would satisfy some nationalists' aims, would not, in the meantime, imperil essential British interests in the area.

Major Young described this British dichotomy:

'Our policy in the Middle East during the last three or four years has been very largely influenced - I will not say controlled - by two strong personalities. On the Syrian side we have had Colonel Lawrence, encouraging Arab aspirations from anti-French motives. On the Mesopotamian side we have had Sir Arnold Wilson checking the same aspirations and making no effort to disguise his reasons for doing so'.¹

The attitude of the Iraqi officers was another factor in confusing the picture. Some of them were openly and bravely in the forefront of the struggle. Others took a position of duality; while discretely encouraging the movement, they, vis-a-vis the British, had assumed moderation and dis-association. The British Political Officer at Dair cleverly argued:

'... I think there is no doubt that Yasin Pasha's party not only countenanced but encouraged it. If it was successful Ramadhan would be congratulated. If it was unsuccessful he would be disowned'.²

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1. F.O.371/5228/E.8483. British Policy in Mesopotamia. A memorandum by Major H. Young, p.4, Un.d. (June 1920).
 2. F.O.371/5128/E.1264. Report from P.O. Dair-ez-Zor, January 1920.

By disguising his real role, Faisal managed to further confuse the situation. He displayed his shrewdness by managing to preserve friendly links with two sides who were at each other's throat. On the one hand, the appointments of Ramaḍān and Mawlud were decreed by his government. He personally gave the officers large sums of money to cover the costs of the border operations.¹ Faisal refused the dismissal, so much demanded by the British,² of the Iraqi officials in his region who were directly responsible for the military attacks.

On the other hand, Faisal told the Iraqi officers that he was unable to come openly to their support because he needed British assistance to preserve Syria's independence. He also used that 'laughable' pretext of Iraq being 'Abd Allah's sphere of influence of which he can not violate.'³ Faisal, in front of the British, condemned the officers' actions and pleaded lack of control over his enthusiastic followers.

Upon hearing the first news of the attack on Dair, Faisal, on the 18th December 1919, wrote to the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff and explicitly repudiated all connection with Ramaḍān's action.⁴ When military operations were intensified, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs wired the British in Cairo assuring them that '... the Syrian Government has no connection whatever with such affairs'.⁵ The Minister went on to say that 'Faisal is taking

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1. Taḥsīn al 'Askari, Dhekkreīāti 'an al Thawra al 'Arabiya al Kubra wa al Thawra al 'Irāqiya, Vol.2 (Baghdad, 1936), p.56. The writer at the time of the event was head of Dair al Zor police. Also, 'Ali Jawdat, op. cit., pp.93-4.
 2. On the 25th February 1920, Wilson telegraphed the I.O. suggesting that the Arab Government 'should be induced to remove' Iraqi officials who were responsible for the agitation on the borders. F.O.371/5128/E.1392, No.2497. A few days later, the I.O. wired the F.O. informing them that 'Mr. Secretary Montagu would invite Earl Curzon ... to invite Emir Feisul (1) to replace officials in eastern portion of his territory, by others less hostile to /H.M.G.; (2) to hand over for trial certain individuals specified'. F.O.371/5130/E.8001. From I.O. to Under S. of S. F.O.
 3. 'Ali Jawdat, op. cit., p.91.
 4. Together with the letter, a telegram to Amir Zeid from Faisal was attached demanding of him urgent action against Ramaḍān's behaviour. The British Authorities in Iraq gave this telegram the widest possible publicity especially in the areas around Dair.
W.O.33.969
F.O.371/5129/E.2577. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. March 24th, No.3699
 5. F.O.371/5130/D.9297. From Minister F.A. Damascus to G.O.C. Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Dated 2.7.1920. No.1073.

pains to quieten the Arabs on all occasions'.¹ A week later the British General Headquarters in Cairo telegraphed the War Office and the following most interesting paragraph was to occur in the telegram:

'... It is certain that the Arab Administration know of and possibly encouraged the situation at Dairozzor. Gaffar Pasha however assures me this is not so. He also assures me that Faisal does all in his power to prevent it. I have however written to Faisal informing him of the information above and requesting him to take steps to stop all hostile acts. How-
ever I doubt if he can do so. As the best course to strengthen
his hands I consider still payments of subsidy'.²

Lord Allenby confirmed the above opinion and, during the most decisive days in Iraq he argued 'Lack of resources make it difficult for Faisal to maintain order'.³ The Political Officer of Dair wrote 'I have no doubt that Amir Faisal is absolutely honest when he says that he didn't countenance this move'.⁴

It goes without saying that such views were in complete contrast to the 'accusations' uttered by Wilson and Haldane. One is not quite sure if the India Office was serious when they telegraphed Wilson on the 11th June asking him for a 'summary of hostile Sharifian action and evidence of connection with Damascus Government'.⁵ Wilson in his reply pointed out:

'The sending of a succession of extremists to Dair-ez-Zor in an official capacity from Ahed-el-Iraq (the Mesopotamian Nationalist Society in Syria) is in itself sufficient proof of their lack of desire to help'.⁶

The Civil Commissioner suggested that Faisal be made to remove 'Mesopotamian Nationalists' who are his representatives at Dair.⁷ Ten days earlier Wilson had informed the India Office that 'a virtual state of war exists between Sherifian forces and those of H.M.G. in Mesopotamia'.⁸

1. Ibid.

2. F.O.371/5129/E.6715. From G.H.Q. Egypt to W.O. No.703G. dated 14th June 1920. Italics mine.

3. F.O.371/5130/E.8561. From Lord Allenby to W.O., dated 19th July 1920

4. F.O.371/5128/E.1264. Report from P.O. Dair-ez-Zor, January 1920.

5. F.O.371/5130/E.6905. From S. of S. I.O. to C.C. Baghdad, dated 11th June 1920

6. F.O.371/5130/E.7219. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 18th June 1920

7. Ibid.

8. F.O.371/5129/E.6324. Dated 8th June 1920, No.6806.

Nevertheless the War Office expressed doubts to the India Office concerning the attribution 'to Sharifian influence the anti-British activity of the Arabs on the Euphrates',¹ and enquired whether 'the hostility may not be inspired by the Young Arab Party of Damascus'.² Major Young wrote that:

'Colonel Gribbon rang me up today /14th June 1920/ to say that the War Office did not altogether like Sir A. Wilson's repeated accusations of Sharifian complicity in the frontier disturbances'.³

The India Office assumed a 'neutral' position. They telegraphed the War and Foreign Offices 'enquiring' whether intelligence officers in Syria could confirm Wilson's views. 'If so' the India Office suggested that the discontinuation of subsidies should be considered.⁴

It is hard to believe that the British Authorities were genuinely unable to recognize the Iraqi nationalists' and Syrian Government's real role in the events. The crux of the matter, one assumes, is that the British over-'academic' attitude was, basically, motivated by their discomfort with Wilson's policy and their certain 'sympathies' with Iraqi officers. Major Young was more precise and straightforward when he wrote:

'My own view is - as it always has been - that it is lamentable that any officer who was with Faisal should adopt an anti-British attitude, and that the spirit of our administration in Mesopotamia is largely - if not entirely - responsible for this. Wilson's implacable hostility to anything Sherifian has caused us a great deal of trouble in the past and will cause us more in the future. I am strongly opposed to his suggestion of offensive action beyond the Mesopotamian frontier by aircraft and earnestly trust that it may not be approved'.⁵

The British Government was at real pains to whitewash Faisal of any responsibility. When Churchill was asked 'Where these Sherifian Officers came from?', he gave the extraordinary reply of '... I do not want to make any charges I cannot prove'.⁶ In the same session Churchill publicly gave

1. Ibid. E.6729. From Army Council W.O. to S. of S. for I.O. un.d.

2. Ibid.

3. F.O.371/5129/E.6324. Major H. Young's handwritten comment (dated 14/6) on Wilson's telegram No. 6806 (8th June 1920).

4. F.O.371/5128/E.95. From I.O. to W.O. and F.O., dated 12th February 1920.

5. F.O.371/5129/E.6324. Major Young's comment on Wilson's telegram No.6806

6. The Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Volume 130 (H.M.S.O., 1920), dated 22nd June 1920. Question from Mr. Ormsby Gore, p.1991

Faisal his 'letter of indulgence'.

'... the term "Sherifian" has been applied to the officers who led the attack on Tal 'Afar, but this expression may not be strictly accurate. Emir Faisal ... has given repeated assurances that these raids would be repudiated by him. It seems more probable that the anti-British hostility of the Arabs on the Euphrates is inspired rather by the Young Arab Party at Damascus than by the representatives of the Sherifian family'.¹

Nearly a month later, Churchill again 'assured' the members of the House of Commons that 'there was no reason to connect the rising with Arab rulers'.² To be more precise, the British attitude, at that stage, was one of confusion than of clarity. Wilson was, objectively, left alone and handcuffed by his superiors, in front of a rising and aggressive nationalist movement, which by shrewdness or force of circumstances was able to exploit the prevailing contradictions among the British. Had the British acted swiftly by removing Wilson and establishing a different policy, then they might have mastered the subsequent developments. By declining to use force and being hesitant to bring about political reforms; the path to an armed uprising was widely opened.

(b) The Attack on Tal 'Afar

The offensive on Tal 'Afar was different from that on Dair in the following respects: (a) whereas the operations in Dair were disguised by the so-called 'border issue', the Iraqi officers' onslaught against Tal 'Afar was an openly anti-British action; (b) the offensive against Tal 'Afar had, unlike Dair, caused the violent death of British soldiers; (c) the early operations in Dair were of a tribal character, whereas the attack on Tal 'Afar was solely organized by Iraqi officers and members of al 'Ahd; (d) the operations in Tal 'Afar were organized in the close co-operation of 'Ahd's members in Mosul, Tal 'Afar and Syria in an ambitious plan to occupy the whole of the Mosul area and as part of the preparation for the 'revolution'.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., Vol.131, dated 15th July 1920, p.2577.

When Churchill was asked about the participation of Iraqis, in Syria, in the attacks, he replied 'I should be rather shy of giving an answer to that without having an opportunity to verifying the facts'.
Ibid., Vol.132, dated 27th July 1920, p.1191.

(i) Arab Nationalists of Mosul: All through this chapter we have been dealing with the activities and tendencies of Iraqi nationalists abroad. This derived its justifications from several factors, one of which lies in the semi-independence of the two components of the Iraqi independence movement. Tal 'Afar (or indeed Mosul) confronts us with an exception. The nationalists' activities in that area were a product of a joint effort of Iraqi nationalists inside and outside Iraq.

It has been mentioned that a certain (al 'Alam) Arab nationalist society was in existence during the late Turkish and early British periods in Mosul.¹ However, and because of the strong links between Mosul and Syria (the centre of al 'Ahd), the 'Alam society decided to join al 'Ahd, to become its Mosul branch and to accept political directions from al 'Ahd's general centre in Damascus and afterward in Dair al Zor. This decision was taken in May 1919, and was sent to Syria together with the names of the new 'administrative committee'.² It is interesting to observe that although the authorities admitted their failure to uncover the leaders of this society,³ yet they were able to pinpoint al Jalabi, al Jalili and Thabit as active leaders of al 'Ahd.⁴

In terms of organization and contacts, the Arab movement in Mosul was, unlike that of Baghdad and the Middle of the Euphrates, in profound interaction with the Iraqi nationalists in Syria. However, in its political views, it was characterised by a radical and violent anti-British tendency, and a strong Islamic outlook. In this respect it had more in common with Iraqi nationalists in Baghdad than with those who were in Syria. This could be explained by Mosul's proximity to Turkey and the existence of a large non-Arab population.

The geographical proximity of Mosul to Turkey, the Turkish claim over

1. Supra. P. 75

2. The committee was composed of the following persons: Muḥammad Rau'f al Ghulāmi (Mu'tamad - Agent), Dīā' Yunis al Tala'fari (Kātib - Secretary), Ibrāhīm 'Aṭār Bāshī (treasurer), Dr. Dāoud al Jalabi, Mustāfa al Jalili, Sa'id Hāj Thābit, Muḥammad Amin al 'Umari, Yāsīn al 'Uraibi, 'Abd Allah al 'Umari. Letter from Mosul's 'Ahd to 'general centre', dated 24th May 1919, published in Ṣada al Aḥrār (Mosul, 10th October 1952).

3. F.O.371/5130/E.9897. Memorandum dated 25th June 1920 from P.O. Mosul.

4. F.O.371/6349/171. 'Personalities, Mosul, Arbil and frontiers', Summer 1920.

Mosul and the existence of an active pro-Turkish society,¹ were factors behind the emergence of an interesting Arab nationalist attitude in Mosul. On the one hand, Mosul's al 'Ahd was vigorously hostile to the pro-Turkish group.² Furthermore, the fear of a Turkish re-occupation of, and a British failure to defend, Mosul was a major factor in urging the society to demand of al 'Ahd's general centre an immediate plan for an 'Arab occupation' of Mosul.³

On the other hand, it was the very same factors which had motivated Mosul's 'Ahd to envisage, indeed to explore, the possibilities of an Arab-Turco co-operation to do away with the British occupation. Such a notion finds its reflection in the content of an important letter sent to 'Ahd general centre from its branch in Mosul. The letter commenced with a bitter attack on the British Administration and its most 'ruthless and suppressive' methods. It expressed doubts as to the intentions of America which was considered as a 'British tool', while France was seen as an undisguised enemy. Britain had openly betrayed its Arab commitments and would undermine any attempt at Arab independence. Although political methods and diplomacy were appreciated, they were rather futile. Thus, the letter suggested any hope or trust in the Allies be given up. Instead, the only alternative for the Arabs lay in their alliance with the Turks and the Bolsheviks. However, the letter pointed out that Bolshevik principles were 'harmful' to Iraq, and what was desired was an alliance with a growing unimperialistic force and not the importation of its ideas. The letter emphasised that growing support for Mustafa Kemal in Mosul and the growing intolerance of British occupation. 'The British will never evacuate Iraq but only by the force of arms', so argued the letter. This, according to the letter,

1. This society was formed in Mosul in May 1919. It exploited the victories of Attaturk, the uncertainty of Mosul's future and the profound Islamic feelings to propagate a pro-Turkish movement. The majority of its members were Turks, Turcoman and Kurds of whom the majority were ex-Turkish officials. However, this group included not a few Arabs.
A. al Tala'fary Qahtān, Thawrat Tela'far, (Baghdad, 1969), pp.62-4.

2. Ibid.

3. (a) Letter dated 24th May 1919, from Mosul's 'Ahd to 'general centre', Sada al Ahrār, (Mosul, 24th October 1952)
(b) Letter dated February 1920, from Mosul's 'Ahd to general centre, Sada al Ahrār, (Mosul, 9th April 1954).

pre-necessitated two conditions: the sending of Iraqi officers into tribal areas, and an alliance should be concluded with major powers to assist the Iraqis.¹

Mosul's 'Ahd put its theoretical beliefs into practice. Muḥammad al 'Umari was sent to Mardin to contact the Turks. In a secret letter from Mardin, he disclosed that his mission was approved by Mawlud Mukhlīṣ, 'Alī Jawdat and the 'known' ideas of Yāsīn al Ḥāshimī. He stated that an agreement was concluded with the Turks on the understanding that: a confederation was to be established between Arab and Turks; the Caliphate was to be Turkish; Arabs are to 'occupy' Iraq including Mosul and to form a national government; the Turks were to help the Arab nationalists with military equipment.² The Turks in Mardin gave al 'Umari some weapons but declined to give him cannons, due to their fear of an Arab occupation of Mosul.³

The 'general centre' of al 'Ahd, in its turn, carried contacts with the Turks: Ra'uf al Shahwānī and Rashīd Khoja were sent to Constantinople to conduct negotiations.⁴ Maḥmūd al Sanawī brought some arms from Dīār Bakir.⁵ 'Alī Jawdat was in constant contact with 'Ajami al Sa'dun and Turkish officers who provided him with large quantities of military equipment.⁶

Arab nationalist co-operation with the Turks assumed a new dimension when Mosul's 'Ahd and the pro-Turkish society were able to conclude, in mid-1920, a common plan of action against the British.⁷ This solidarity lasted up to the arrival of Faisal in Iraq, when it was bound to break down. This new alliance with the Turks must have been of an important political significance. However, the unresolved dispute over Mosul, the non-Ottoman, or non-Islamic, tendencies of Mustafa Kemal, and the deep mistrust between Arabs and Turks were all elements which handicapped the development of such an alliance from assuming a more

1. Letter dated 30th November 1919, from Mosul's 'Ahd to general centre, Ṣada al Aḥrār, (Mosul, 3rd April 1953).

2. Letter dated 15th April 1920, from Makhzum (Muḥammad al 'Umari) to Mosul's 'Ahd. Ṣada al Aḥrār, (Mosul, 23rd October 1954).

3. Taḥsīn al 'Askari, op. cit., Vol.2, p.92.

4. A. al Tela'fari Qaḥṭān, op. cit., p.67

5. 'Alī Jawdat, op. cit., pp.131-4.

6. Ibid., p.135.

7. A. al Tela'fari Qaḥṭān, op. cit., pp.70-71, 396-7.

serious nature. In September 1920, the British Intelligence reported:

*(a) Nationalist elements in Syria and Mesopotamia were systematically organised for a considerable period until they obtained such cohesion among themselves as enabled them to exercise a powerful influence on local feeling in both countries, and on Arab Government at Damascus.

(b) This having been achieved, their union with Turkish Nationalists was brought about. This was considerably facilitated by Feisal's failure to control extremists at the beginning of November 1919 ...

(c) ... Wide differences exist. There is evidence of great distrust of Arab by the Turk and vice versa, we may hope to take advantage of this ...

(g) Mustafa Kemal is very luke-warm adherent to pan Islamist policy ... he is likewise hostile to the Arabs (but he is being forced ... to use them)¹.

Furthermore, the Political Officer of Mosul telegraphed Wilson informing him that 'the movement does not appear to have had active Turkish support. The 'Iraq Army' was allowed to buy food in Nisibin, but the Government there tried to capture an officer who joined the movement'.²

On the other hand, it seems that such a probable Arab-Turkish alliance was a factor in urging the British Authorities to promote the idea of Arab independence as to cut the way for any Turkish advances. On behalf of Lord Curzon, the India Office was informed that:

'One of the principal dangers, not only to British policy in Mesopotamia, but to British policy elsewhere, is the relation between Mustapha Kamal and the Mesopotamian extremists ... It is necessary therefore to begin as soon as possible to work for Arab independence of a kind which will lead to division between Turks and Arabs and amity between Arabs and British'.³

There was another element behind the strong Islamic tendencies of Mosul's Arab nationalists, namely the demographic character of the north of Iraq in general and of Mosul in particular.⁴ Mosul being surrounded by non-Arab ethnic groups was an element in producing (a) a sharp national Arab consciousness, and (b) this Arab awareness was accompanied, perhaps even modified, by

1. W.O.106/2-/34. From S. of S. to C.C. Bzghdad, dated 23rd September 1920, No.1930.

2. F.O.371/5130/E.9897. From P.P. Mosul, L.F. Naider, Lieut-Colonel to C.C. Baghdad, dated 25th June 1920

3. F.O.371/5229/10440. Signed by J.A. Tilley, F.O. to S. of S. for I.O. dated 11th September 1920.

4. Supra, , pp. 7/.

a conspicuous Islamic inclination. The latter element could also be explained by two other factors concerning Arab-Kurdish relations: historically speaking, there was hardly any racial or ethnical strife between Arabs and Kurds;¹ both ethnic groups shared Islam and Sunnism.

The primary task for Arab nationalists at that period was the confrontation with the British. Contacts with the Kurds and Turcomans were considered of vital importance in attempting to establish a common anti-British front. All through the year of 1919, the Kurdish area was a theatre for a series of anti-British uprisings.² This in itself was another factor to encourage Arab nationalist approach to Kurds. When Arab nationalists decided to strike at Mosul, the primary target was that of Tal 'Afar, which was populated by Arabs and Turcoman alike. Although the 'Aāferah tribe, which played a remarkable role in the rising, was in fact an Arab tribe,³ yet the Turcoman role before and during the movement was of no less significance,⁴ In fact, one finds that some Kurds had actually joined al 'Ahd society of Mosul.⁵ It is interesting to observe that some 32 distinguished Kurds in Mosul had raised a petition to the Peace Conference demanding the unity of Iraq, its independence and the establishment of strong ties with other Arab states. They deputed Faisal, Mawlud Mukhlis and 'Ali Jawdat to represent them at the Peace Conference.⁶

However, and in contrast to an over-optimistic notion of history, one has to point out that these contacts and attempts had practically produced only limited results of minor political impact. The Political Officer of Mosul wrote:

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1. Jalāl Tālibāni, Kurdustān wa al Ḥaraka al Qawmiya al Kurdiya, (Beirut, 1971).
 2. A.T. Wilson, Clash of Loyalties, op. cit., pp.147-155.
 3. M.Y.S. Wahib, Tārīkh Tal'afar, (Mosul, 1967), pp.87-8.
 4. Sh. Šābir, Mujaz Tārīkh al Turcoman, Vol.1, (Baghdad, 1958), pp.138-9.
 5. 'A. M. al Ghulāmi, Thawratunā fi Shemāl al 'Iraq. (Baghdad, 1966), pp.28-9
 6. Ibid., pp.27-8, Appendix No.1, pp.112-3.

'It is a matter of congratulation that Kurdistan remained quiet. The Kaimakam of Jezirah was in communication with the leaders of the movement, an attack was expected at Zakho, and at the time of the outbreak there was a "storm focus" forming in Muzuri; but in spite of all, the Kurds did not move'.

However, he pointed out that 'Ahd circulars have been freely distributed throughout Arab and Kurdish districts.¹

The general trend in the Kurdish political movement aspired to Kurdish autonomy rather than Arab unity. Likewise, the Arab nationalist movement in Iraq was essentially an Arab movement in both its aspirations and social composition. Nevertheless, such contacts, which were motivated by a strong desire to win over Kurdish and Turcoman sympathy to the Arab anti-British struggle, were bound to stamp the Mosul 'Ahd outlook with clear Islamic inclinations. Such a tendency was strikingly clear in the 'Ahd's letters sent to Rashid Barwarri² (a Kurdish leader), Nādim Naftajhi³ (a Turcoman leader), in the leaflets directed to Kurdish areas⁴ and, above all, in the very ranks of al 'Ahd itself. The aim of Iraq's unity and independence and its confederation with Arab countries (Syria and Hijaz) was not compromised. However, a special consideration was given to the rights of minorities, an emphasis was put on the Islamic league and on more than one occasion patriotism (Waṭaniya) rather than nationalism (Qawmiya) was upheld.

In regard to this work, one finds no imperative reason for a detailed account concerning the rising in and the attack on Tal'afar.⁵ However, two

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1. F.O.371/5130/E.9897. Report on the recent attack on Tel Afar.
 2. A.M. Ghulāmi, op. cit., pp.115-6. Appendix No.2.
 3. Ibid., pp.119-22. Appendix No.4.
 4. Ibid., pp.123-7. Appendix No.5.
 5. An extensive campaign of political propaganda and agitation led by al 'Ahd in Mosul, Tal 'Afar and across the borders was taking place during May and June. On the 26th May news was received of the arrival at Fadghami of a body of 'Iraq' troops, led by Jamīl al Madfa'i, who was getting munitions down the Khabur. On the 2nd June, al 'Ahd organized a meeting in Tal 'Afar 'Calling on the aghas to hold themselves in readiness for the Sharif, whose forces were concentrating on the road near 'Awāinat'. On the same day the gendarme assistant officer, Jamīl Muḥammad, deserted his post and the telegraph lines were cut. On the 4th June, some tribesmen rode into the town and Tel 'Afar rose. The gendarme officer, Lieut. Stuart, was shot by one of his own native officers, Muḥammad 'Ali, and no resistance was made by the gendarmes. The British gendarme instructor, the clerk and the Vickers gunner held out on the roof of the billet for some time until the arrival of the Iraqi troops, when they were killed by grenades. The A.P.O., Major Barlow, was also shot while

contd.

remarks are considered of relevance to the discussion: the preparations for the Arab 'occupation' of Tal 'Afar, which were carefully planned by Iraqi nationalists inside Mosul and across the borders in Syria, were exclusively organised by al 'Ahd group. The tribal Sheikh (Sayid 'Abd Allah Sayid Waheb), who organized the rising of the 'Aāferah tribe, was affiliated to al 'Ahd.¹ The two Iraqi police officers who led the 'mutiny' within the British-led gendarme force were both (Jamīl Muḥammad al Khalīl and Muḥammad 'Alī) members of al 'Ahd. Their plan was co-ordinated with the tribal leaders and the marching Iraqi force by 'Abd al Ḥamīd Dabouni (the ex-assistant of the Assistant Political Officer at Tal 'Afar) who was an active member of al 'Ahd. He resigned his job in the British Administration to organize contacts with the 'Ahd group in Syria. It goes without saying that Jamīl al Madfa'i and his fellow officers, who entered Tal 'Afar and ended the last pockets of British resistance, were all 'Ahd members.²

5 contd.

he was trying to escape. On the 5th June a punitive column of British armoured cars was ambushed near Tal 'Afar, none of the crews escaping.

The fall of Tel 'Afar was the sign for a general rising of all the tribes in the district. Small parties raided the big and pro-British Christian and Yazidi villages (Tel Kaif, Uskuf, Algosh and Jabil Sinjar). All wires were cut, and all roads from Mosul were rendered most unsafe.

Jamīl was trying, in Albu Maria, to concentrate for a march on Mosul itself. The P.O. of Mosul wrote: 'Had the "Iraq" force reached the vicinity of Mosul I have no doubt that the outbreak in the town - which had been promised - would have occurred'. However, the British were quick to send more troops against Jamīl's army and they obliged him to retreat.

F.O.371/5129/E.6165. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 4th June 1920, No.6660. Also No.6712, dated 5th June 1920, also No.6942, dated 7th June 1920 and F.O.371/5130/E.9897, No.8 Archives, dated 14th August 1920.

1. Muḥammad Yunis 'Abd al Waheb, Ahamiyat Tal'afar fi thawrat al 'Irāq al Kubra, (Mosul, 1967).
2. After the successes of Ramaḍān Shallāsh and the failure of the last Iraqi diplomatic effort, 'Alī Jawdat and Jamīl Madfa'i met Faisal on the 18th March 1920. They informed him of their decision to move to Dair and 'fight the English who had betrayed their promises'. Faisal refused to allow his brother, Zaid, to join them, but he agreed to aid them with financial support. A 'national committee' was formed of 'Alī Jawdat (president), Taḥsīn 'Alī, Mawlud Mukhlis (military governor of Dair) and Jamīl Madfa'i. The latter formed the Iraqi army which was composed of Iraqi officers in Syria and Mosul, and recruited its soldiers from 'Aqidat, Shamar, Jabur tribes.

'Alī Jawdat, op. cit., pp.90-122.

(ii) The Impact of the Tal' Afar Attack: Thanks to Wilson's policies, a potentially non-radical group who had co-operated with the British was pushed into assuming a 'radical' line of anti-British violence. Wilson's dogmatism was so irrational that he openly preferred the evacuation of Iraq rather than coming to terms with the officers. On the 9th June 1920, he wrote:

'We cannot maintain our position as mandatory by a policy of conciliation of extremists ...

If /H.M.G./ regard such a policy as impracticable, or beyond our strength, I submit that they would be better to face the alternative, formidable and terrible as it is, and evacuate Mesopotamia'.¹

In an extreme contrast to such a view, Gertrude Bell wrote, on the 10th April 1920:

'I think we are on the edge of a pretty considerable Arab nationalist demonstration with which I am a good deal in sympathy. It will, however, force our hand and we shall have to see whether it will leave us with enough hold to carry on here ...'.²

Wilson was aware of such opinions and of the fact that his own views were not shared by the British higher authorities, but he was confident enough of his own judgement to write to a friend:

'I am quite sure that I am on the right lines and am doing my best and if the Government do not think so that is their misfortune not mine. So long as I am here I propose to continue to carry on at full blast and I do not care a damn for anyone ... H.M.G. find it much harder to make up their minds than I do.'³

Prior to the uprising, it was clear that the British Authorities were divided on the subject of Iraq into three major trends: on the one hand there was Wilson's direction demanding direct British control over Iraq; on the other hand, there was another trend advocating a compromise solution with Iraqi nationalists. This trend was represented, in spite of certain differences,⁴ by officials like Lawrence, Young and Gertrude Bell. The 'British Government' was somewhere in between, or to be more precise, confused by several conflicting factors and thus

1. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, Papers and letters, Dept. of Manuscripts, British Museum. Vol.52455. No.6948. From C.C. Baghdad to S.S.I. London, dated 9th June 1920.

2. Lady Bell, (ed.), . op. cit., Vol.11, p.486

3. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, Papers and Letters, British Museum, Vol.52456. Extract from a letter to Captain C.S. Stephenson, dated 16th February 1920.

4. Gertrude Bell wrote, 'I can't believe that T.E.L. /Lawrence/ is in ignorance and I will therefore hold him to be guilty of the unpardonable sin of willfully darkening council'.

Gertrude Bell, Private Letters and Papers, Newcastle, Letter dated 19th September 1920

unable to formulate a clear policy. This was evident in the British Government's failure either 'effectively to adopt and provide for the implementation of the policy urged on them by the Acting Civil Commissioner, or resolutely to call the Acting Civil Commissioner to order 'and to insist on him carrying out'¹ its policy.

In May 1920, the Iraqi officers had organized a relatively effective army who represented a serious threat to the British² and endangered their presence in Mosul.³ However, the French invasion of Syria (July 1920) had brought to ashes the officers' dream of 'liberating' Iraq by depriving them of Damascus's support. Nevertheless, Dair and Tal 'Afar were a prelude to a general uprising. Fahad Beg ibn Hadhdhal, the Chief of the 'Amarat section of the 'Anizah tribe and a dedicated supporter of the British,⁴ 'prophetically' remarked to the British: 'Whether you believe it or not, if you do not re-occupy Dair-al-Zour you will have a rebellion on the Lower Euphrates within six months'.⁵

On the 30th June, 1920, the uprising was no more on the agenda; it was a fact. A spark from Rumaithah set the whole the the Mid-Euphrates on the fire of political violence.

1. John Marlowe, op. cit., p.125

2. On 9th June 1920, Wilson wired the I.O. 'G.O.C. ordered evacuation of Zakho ... thinks that Dahuk and Aqrah will have to be evacuated before long ... Mosul can probably be defended, but lines of communication are much harassed by Arabs acting under Sharifian officers'.
F.O.371/5129/E.6439. No.6950.

3. On 21st July 1920 Wilson wired the S.S. for India suggesting the evacuation of the whole of Mosul Wilayat.
F.O.371/5130. No.8785; also Haldane, op. cit., p.235.

4. The Civil Commissioner of Iraq wrote, 'Fahad Beg has drawn subsidy from us since occupation of Baghdad and at present receives Rs.17,000 monthly'.
F.O.371/5129/E.2944. From C.C. to I.O., dated 1st April 1920, No.4044; also, A.T. Wilson, op. cit., pp.78-9.

5. A.L. Haldane, op. cit., pp.33-4.

P A R T I I I

IRAQ UNDER THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION (1914-1921)

Factors Behind the Growth of the Independence Movement

This Part, by its very position in this work, must suffer from certain limitations. It occurs in a work in which the underlying concern is political rather than administrative. Furthermore, it is situated in a research which is not, essentially, dedicated to the study of the British rule over Iraq as much as the British rule's impact on the independence movement in Iraq.

The writer is assuming the existence of a profound interaction between the British Administration and the independence movement. That the policies and attitudes of the Administration, perhaps its mere presence, were bound to generate a considerable impact on the population in regard to their attitude towards the nationalists. The Administration's 'shortcomings' deepened the nationalists' resentment and furthermore enabled them to win over larger support, conclude more alliances and therefore assume more political aggressiveness. On the other hand, the Administration's 'accomplishment' neutralized specific elements or groups and thus alienated them from the nationalist camp.

A selective and not a comprehensive, a critical and not a narrative or descriptive, approach to the British Administration in Iraq therefore seems justified within the framework of this work. Selective, in the sense that there should be special emphasis on particular areas and aspects while others will be neglected. Topics like taxation, land system, tribal relations, and areas like Shi'i cities will be discussed to the exclusion of other aspects of British Administration like Posts, Jails, Health, etc.

It is evident that the British Administration possessed outstanding virtues (e.g. efficiency and administrative integrity). Nevertheless, because this work is devoted to the study of the independence movement, one is bound to give more emphasis to the 'shortcomings' of the Administration. After all, it was these 'misjudgements' which enabled the nationalists to penetrate the groups and areas which were not altogether 'impressed' by the British methods. In fact some of the Administration's virtues' proved, in the long run, to be counter-

productive. In this regard it is helpful to quote S.H. Longrigg, who wrote:

'Few indeed could deny the improvement in the honesty and justice of the /British/ Administration, its prevailing security, its achieved and expected progress in material matters over the familiar Turkish standards. Nevertheless, the charge that the type or tone of this Administration were among the causes of the lawless outbreak so soon and so disappointingly to follow cannot completely be denied.

It was, first, that of a Christian Power. To some indifferent, this fact was objectionable to many, and not least to the Shi'i hierarchy whose status and powers would be lost for ever if a foreign secular Power were to be installed. In Sunni minds a nostalgic feeling for the Caliphate as the true and sole legitimate source of power, even in its temporary defeat, was nearly allied to their religion; and the indulgence of such feelings was the easier and the new regime remain the more rootless and untrusted while peace with Turkey was delayed. Religion and Ottoman loyalties apart, the British regime was foreign and unfamiliar. Its /personnel/ often weak in Arabic, differed from their predecessors, to the point of strangeness, in dress, manner and social customs ... /It/ tended to rigidity of standard, mixed little tolerance with its uncomfortable and not always desired justice and was pitiless to long familiar laxities.'¹

In the first place, the conditions imposed by war itself were very difficult indeed. After all, the main aim of the invading British troops was the defeat of the Turks and not the gratification of the Arabs. The lines on which the British proceeded were dictated more by consideration of military necessity rather than by political expediency.² 'The shortage of transport, both inland and overseas, made it imperatively necessary to develop to the full every source of supply for military needs'.³

Giving priority to military aspects made the introduction of forced labour upon Iraqis almost inevitable. Those 'wretched workmen' and 'half-clothed cultivators' were compelled to work under inhuman and 'heart-breaking' conditions.⁴

Moreover, food was allowed to the markets, only after the requirements of the military authorities were met.⁵ 'Billetting in the towns, blockade measures to keep supply from the enemy, irksome sanitary and veterinary restrictions, control of movement and travel, road-making across canal beds'.⁶

1. S. Longrigg, Iraq 1900-1950 ..., op. cit., p.113. Longrigg served in the Iraqi Administration during 1918 to 1931.

2. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.45.

3. Ibid.

4. H. Young, op. cit., pp.51-2, 65.

5. C.O.696/2. Compilations of Proclamations, Notices ... etc., Relating to Mesopotamia, October 31st 1918, to August 31st 1919. 'Amarah, Proclamation No.1, section 14.

6. S. Longrigg, Iraq ..., op. cit., p.82.

However, more emphasis should be given to the crucially important political questions than to the problems of human suffering generated by the conditions of war. Thus, this Part will first deal with the structure of the British Administration (its ethnic components), its financial policy and then its attitude towards the Iraqi fellāḥīn and the land problem. A separate chapter will be devoted to the Referendum of 1918-1919.

The British Administration had provoked and indeed accelerated the rise of the independence movement. However, special emphasis ought to be given to those sections of the society which were most strongly provoked by the British policy. It will be suggested that they were the intelligentsia and the fellāḥīn. Such a deduction will be examined in this Part.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN IRAQ

During the Ottoman era in Iraq, the Iraqis were not totally debarred from occupying posts in the Ottoman Administration in Iraq. Of the 'administrative personnel', in the Baghdad Wilayat numbering 120, only 20 were Turks, while the rest were Arabs.¹ 'Of the principal executive officials (about 50) half were Turks, the remainder Arabs'.² Out of 104 principal officers holding appointments in the Ottoman Judicial Department in Iraq, 48 were Turks, 45 were Arabs (including 4 Christians and 6 Jews) and 11 were Kurds.³ According to Lawrence 70 per cent of the Ottoman executive civil service was local (i.e. Iraqis), and as far as the Army was concerned, the Arabs represented 60 per cent in officers and 95 per cent in other ranks.⁴ In the year 1914 alone, there were 1,338 Iraqi cadets (128 were Kurds and the rest Arabs) in Ottoman military schools being prepared to become Ottoman officers.⁵

It is against such a background that the composition of the British Administration in Iraq needs to be examined. In 1917, it was reported that the Administration of Baghdad was formed of 2,781, of whom 1,890 were Mesopotamians.⁶ In May 1918, the Administration of Basrah was reported to be composed of 548 personnel, of whom 251 were Mesopotamians.⁷ In August 1920, the Civil Commissioner reported that his Administration contained 11,829 personnel, of whom 8,566 were Iraqis, 1,047 British and 2,216 were Indians.⁸

However, all the above figures fail to distinguish between policy-making and executive posts and insignificant ones. Furthermore, they do not indicate the administrative fields occupied by the highest proportion of Iraqis. In

1. C.O.696/1. Administration Reports, Baghdad Wilayat, 1917, p.3.

2. Ibid., p.2. (Figures stated above are for the year 1913-14).

3. F.O.371/6369/E.14013. Mesopotamia Judicial Department. Report on the Administration of Justice for the year 1920, (Baghdad, 1921). (Figures of 1914), p.17.

4. The Times, 23rd July 1920.

5. 'Abd al Razāq al Hilālī, op. cit., pp.248-252.

6. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports, Baghdad, 1917, p.2.

7. F.O.371/3397/21421. Fortnightly Report, No.13, ending 15th May 1918.

8. F.O.371/50781 Baghdad Memo.23891. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. 14th August 1920, No.9804.

this respect the following table is more useful:

Table

Name of Department	SENIOR POSTS (those who receive more than 600 Rs. per month, or £45)			NON-SENIOR POSTS (those who receive less than 600 Rs. per month)		
	British	Indians	Arabs	British	Indians	Arabs
Central Admin.	5	-	-	55	62	123
Revenue	8	-	-	2	13	7
Finance	18	-	-	2	130	22
Judicial	14	-	10	1	7	238
Customs	12	-	-	9	23	75
Executive Staff (Divisions)	106	-	4	28	316	862
Agriculture	11	-	-	4	22	7
Education	11	-	-	1	4	479
Police	22	-	-	56	17	2,397
Port	28	-	-	8	380	39
Levies	37	-	-	33	17	2,987
Irrigation	42	4	3	1	110	178
Other Departments ¹	203	3	3	315	1,109	1,112
TOTAL	507	7	20	515	2,209	8,546
OVERALL TOTAL						11,804 ²

The above table discloses that:

(a) the Iraqis (of all sects and ethnic groups) formed a low percentage (only 3.5) of the senior posts. The Iraqis were completely absent from many important Departments. All Departments were headed by British Officials. Apart from that, Iraq was divided into administrative units of some 14 Districts, each in charge of a Political Officer, of whom not a single one was an Arab. These Districts were in their turn divided into smaller administrative units run by Assistant Political Officers. Out of nearly 90 Assistant Political Officers there were only 4 of local origin, while the rest were British. This leaves no doubt that (i) only very few Iraqis were occupying senior positions in the Administration; and, (ii) Iraqis were deprived of any actual participation in decision-making concerning any vital administrative question;

1. Other Departments were Jails, Health, Engineering, Repatriation, Post and Telegraph, Printing and Publishing, Stores, Transport, Cypher, Survey and Veterinary. Railways were excluded from the above.

2. Cmd.1061, op. cit., p.122

(b) in the non-senior posts of the Administration which were uninfluential and did not involve any decision-making, and which were low-paid, one finds that the Iraqis represented some 75 per cent. However, it is clear that more than half of this percentage of the Iraqis were either in the Police service (2,397) or in the Levies (2,987). The latter service included Iraqis who were neither Arabs nor Moslems. Furthermore, it is evident that nearly all Iraqis serving in the Police and Levies Departments were occupying non-administrative ranks. Such a conclusion finds its justification in Wilson's telegram, in which he stated that the Indian and British administrators composed only 50.5 per cent of the total administrative personnel.¹ Further evidence was provided by the report of Sir Percy Cox, in which he stated that the number of Iraqis in the Civil Service was only 4,200 (exclusive of Railways).² It is interesting to find that by the 1st April, 1920, the number of the Railways personnel of all grades numbered 24,928; the Indians composed 80 per cent, the British 3 per cent and the Iraqis (Arabs, Kurds and Jews) represented only 17 per cent.³

The number of Indians employed in Iraq was, by December 1920, 53,000. Twenty-four thousand were under the Labour Department, 10,000 in the Inland Water transport, and about 19,000 were employed in the Railways.⁴ It goes without saying that the Army of Occupation was totally composed of British and Indians and that it did not include any Arabs, officers or otherwise, in its ranks.

The Political Implication of such a Structure

(a) The alienation of Iraqi Intelligentsia: It is unfortunate that there are available no figures showing the exact number of Iraqi graduates, educated or prepared for administrative posts. However, if in the year 1914 alone there were some 1,338 Iraqis in military schools, some 15,398 students (excluding girls) in civilian schools⁵ and that in 'Turkish days 70 per cent of the executive

1. F.O.371/5078. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 14th August 1920, No.9804.

2. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, Miscellaneous Papers, Dept. of Manuscripts, British Museum, No.52459, Vol.5, Sir Percy Cox Report, dated July 1920.

3. Cmd. 1061, p.118.

4. Parliamentary Debates, H.C. Vol.139, dated 22nd March 1920, p.2402.

5. 'Abd al Razāq al Hilālī, op. cit., p.252.

civil service was local', then it would be clear that the British had created an acute problem for themselves. An educated class was given the motive and had the ability to incite an effective campaign of anti-British propaganda. Indeed it was a priceless service that was rendered by the British to the Iraqi nationalists by providing them with an easily recruited and most influential group of people.

The best apology for the British policy was that explained by Sir Percy Cox. He pointed out that '... the Turkish Administration ... personnel having disappeared with the retreating troops ... we had no alternative ... but to create a provisional administration from ... British and British Indian personnel'. Cox pointed out that 'certain quarters' suggested after the Armistice 'prompt nationalization of the Administration'. However 'the work of peace proceeded very slowly ... Meanwhile the spirit of "self determination" was gradually permeating the East ... While at the same time our military position ... was rapidly being weakened'. Thus, Cox concluded that 'it would have been nothing short of dangerous, apart from the mere loss of efficiency involved, to embark upon any drastic change in the structure of that Administration'.¹

It seems that Cox's argument confuses a strategic topic like the formation of an Arab Government in Iraq with the question of affiliating Iraqis to some senior posts in the British Administration of Iraq. It is difficult to accept that such a step should have awaited the Peace Treaty. In fact the Administration could have been more efficient and secure had it opened its ranks to the Iraqis. Nothing had raised the spirit of nationalism and 'self-determination' among Iraqi intelligentsia than this 'galling deprivation' of the posts of their country's Administration.

This was mostly felt in Baghdad where the educated people were, unlike those of Basrah, less immersed in commerce. Furthermore, during the Ottoman period, 'the official Class was predominantly recruited from Baghdad and the towns to the north'.² Wilson's Administration in fact made little effective

1. Lady Bell, The Letters of G. Bell, op. cit., Vol.II; Percy Cox, 'Historical Summary', pp.521-3.

2. B. Thomas, Alarms and Excursions in Arabia, (New York, 1931), p.82.

effort to use in senior or even junior posts the considerable experience and good will possessed by the available Iraqis'.¹ Between 1916 and 1918, the Administration sanctioned some 282 employees in Baghdad, of whom only 17 were Muhammedans.² The situation was aggravated by the return of many more Iraqi administrators from Turkey after 1918.

It was inevitable that conditions of unemployment and disillusionment would throw the majority of them into the anti-British movement. In fact they were to form the core of such a movement in Baghdad. In 1920, Cox observed that among the people of Baghdad and Mosul 'there is a very general and impatient desire for a greater share in the Administration and early establishment of a national Government. The majority of intelligentsia are no doubt strong nationalists:...'.³ Gertrude Bell, in her official report, gave the following account:

'But already /early 1920/ the centre of /anti-British/ propaganda had been transferred from Syria and the Euphrates to Baghdad. The dissatisfied element of ex-Turkish employees had received considerable reinforcements during the 18 months which had elapsed since the armistice... whether they were pro-Arab or pro-Turk they were usually averse from foreign control ... /this situation/ gave point to the complaints of malcontents and led them to disbelieve in the genuineness of official declarations. They argued that the creation of the Syrian State was due to the victory of Arab arms and that similar liberties in Mesopotamia could be gained only by a successful resort to force'.⁴

This situation of unemployment or of low salaries was accompanied by a very high increase in the cost of living. It was reported, in late 1917, that prices were 'from eight to ten times higher than pre-war figures'.⁵ Gertrude Bell complained to her father that the cost of living in Baghdad was 'enormous'. And although she was rationed, she pointed out that 'necessities of life such as soap, rice, eggs and sugar' were all at 'preposterous prices'.⁶

Efficiency was Cox's cry and his other pretext to justify the non-employment of Iraqis in the administration. Wilson stated that: 'It was almost impossible

1. Longrigg, Iraq ..., op. cit., pp.113-4.

2. F.O.371/3387.. The Future of Mesopotamia, Note by Sir Percy Cox, 22nd April, 1918.

3. F.O.371/5231/E.13471 dated 26th October 1920.

4. Cmd.1061, op. cit., pp.139-140.

5. F.O.371/3397/21421. Fortnightly report for fortnight ending 15th November 1917, p.3.

6. Lady Bell (ed.), op. cit. Vol.II, dated 31st January 1918, pp.441-2.

to enlist Arab clerks for the purpose of the Civil Administration ... we had no option but to employ even in the districts a large proportion of Indian clerks'.¹ The Civil Commissioner justified his policy on the grounds that the Indians, in time of war, were cheaper than Arabs.² In a telegram to the India Office, Wilson claimed that 'the present Administration have had the greatest difficulty in finding Muhammadans competent to fill even the lower appointments'.³

A British Administrative report stated:

'... those who remained /Iraqi Administrators/ have been found with a few exceptions to be of little use to us owing:

- (1) In few cases to their pro-Turkish sympathies;
- (2) To the fact that they continued the bad traditions of the late Government which are not in harmony with our methods;
- (3) They were unpopular with the landowning classes and tribal leaders'.⁴

All these arguments are administratively inclined. What was at stake was the political consequences of such a policy. It is hardly convincing that Iraqi administrators would have light-heartedly accepted that it was for the sake of their country that they should be dropped from its administration.

Moreover, there are certain indications which suggest that Iraqi administrative efficiency was not as poor as it was argued. In Syria (1918-1920), Iraqi officers were virtually running the whole of the Syrian Civil Service. Subsequent developments in Iraq were to indicate that lack of confidence in Iraqi capabilities was, somehow, exaggerated. Wilson himself was to admit in 1931 that the 'ultimate outcome' in Iraq 'was less unfavourable than he had feared'.⁵ In fact, one finds that some senior British officials in the Iraq Administration of that period did not agree with Wilson's views. In 1918, Mr. Bonham-Carter rendered a fine tribute to the Arab staff of his Judicial Department and to their valuable services, without which 'it would have been hardly

1. A.T. Wilson, Clash of Loyalties, op. cit., pp.88-9.

2. Ibid., p.88. Thus one finds it difficult to understand Wilson's statement that 'from the outset I did my best to induce H.M. Government to allow me to introduce a very large Arab element into the Civil Administration ...' Ibid., p.313.

3. F.O.371/5226/4811. From C.C. Baghdad to S.S. of I.O. London, dated 26th April 1920, No.5111.

4. C.O.696/1 A.R. Baghdad Wilayat, 1917, p.3.

5. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.316.

possible ... to carry out the policy of applying Turkish law and procedure!.¹ With such views, it was not surprising that the Department of Justice stood as an exception in its relatively high percentage of Arab employment.²

In fact, it was soon after the Armistice, that Mr. Bonham-Carter had put forward proposals for associating Arabs more closely with the administration and suggested, amongst other proposals, the appointment of an Iraqi as Minister of Justice or, as an alternative, as adviser to the Department.³ Neither of the two suggestions was adopted.

(b) The 'Alienation' of the Administration: On the other hand the efficiency of the British Administration in Iraq was not altogether beyond criticism. On several occasions the Civil Commissioner drew the attention of the India Office to the considerable, even alarming, shortage in his administration personnel and thus to the 'high difficulties facing his few members of staff'.⁴ Such a shortage was 'creating dangerous situation in Mesopotamia', was 'destructive of public confidence', and placing a burden upon the remaining officers 'which is heavier than they can bear'.⁵ In late 1919 Wilson complained 'My great difficulty is still shortage of staff'.⁶

Furthermore, those 'few and over-burdened' British Officials were facing another difficult situation, namely their insufficient knowledge of the country and its traditions. 'On their first appointment comparatively few knew anything about the Arab, his customs or his language', so wrote Sir Percy Cox.⁷ Sir Aylmer Haldane divided the British Officials in the Iraqi Administration into

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1. C.O.692/2. A.R. Report on the Administration of Justice for the year 1918 (Mesopotamia Judicial Department), pp.2-6.
 2. F.O.371/6369/14013. Mesopotamia Judicial Department, Report on the Administration of Justice for the Year 1920, p.17. The Report stated the Department employed 104 personnel (immediately before the War), of whom 45 were Iraqis. In 1920 there were 289 employees, of whom 271 were Iraqis.
 3. Ibid., p.3.
 4. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.158 (telegram dated 22nd December 1918).
 5. F.O.371/882/23/MES/20/1, dated 10th March 1920, No.3494.
 6. Sir A.T. Wilson, Private Letters, 1903-1921, Vol.2, The London Library, letter dated 9.12.1919.
 7. Sir Arnold Wilson, Miscellaneous Papers, B.M., No.52459, Vol.5, Sir Percy Cox Report, July 1920.

four groups according to the sources from which they were recruited. The first group was composed of those who were employed from the Army after the Armistice, were added to the Civil Administration and were 'stationed in outlying districts such as Shatrah, Qalat Sikar, Diwaniyah and Afaj'.¹ According to Haldane 'these officers ... almost without exception, had no experience of the work that would be required of them ...'.²

It is worthwhile to recall that all the above-mentioned areas were to become centres of the 1920 uprising. Iraqi books referring to that period are loaded with unfavourable accounts as to the 'harsh' conduct of British Officers in such areas with particular reference to Major Daly, the Political Officer of the tribal district of Dīwāniyah.³ In fact, it was as early as April 1917 that the Political Officer of Basrah had written to Wilson pointing out the unnecessary severity of Major Daly.⁴ Three years later the Civil Commissioner became alarmed at the situation in Dīwāniyah, and the harshness with which Major Daly was treating the Arab tribes who 'would like to be treated a little less justly and a little more kindly'.⁵ In July 1920, Wilson had to write to Daly directing his attention to the excessive 'harshness' which he was allowing himself towards the Arabs.⁶ In his reply, Major Daly admitted that such was the case.⁷

The second group of British administrators in Iraq were members of the Indian Civil Service who had mainly controlled the headquarters of the administrative work. They had varying periods of experience of Indian methods and some of them were men of distinguished abilities. However, and according to Haldane, they 'were accustomed to a settled and highly centralised form of administration, and one which is noteworthy for its fondness for regulations

1. Sir Aylmer Haldane, op. cit., p.20.

2. Ibid.

3. 'A. al Hassani, op. cit., p.135; also 'A.Sh. al Yāsiri, op. cit., p.172.

4. Sir Arnold Wilson, Miscellaneous Papers, B.M., No.52458, Vol.4, telegram from P.O. Basrah to C.C. Baghdad, dated 28th April 1917, No.3577.

5. Ibid. No.52456, Vol.2, Letter dated 24th April 1920.

6. Ibid., No.52458, Vol.4, Letter to Major Daly dated 14th July 1920.

7. Ibid., Letter dated 20th July 1920.

and red tape'.¹ The British Civil Service in the Sudan was more suited to provide Iraq with some British administrators. Its methods were more flexible, its officers were granted more initiative and most of them had the advantage of knowing Arabic. However, only four British officials came to Iraq from such a source.²

The remaining officers of the Administration of Iraq were principally recruited from Territorial Force officers. In Haldane's view, 'these officers laboured under the disadvantage of having no previous acquaintance with the country and no knowledge of its people or experience of administrative work'.³ Haldane concluded that the administration system was 'based in the main on past Indian experience, the result being that a system came into existence which was far too rigid, and one to which the people not only were not accustomed, but for which they were wholly unprepared'.⁴

In December 1918, Sir John Hewett and a committee of senior British Officials in India and Egypt arrived in Iraq on a mission charged by the Army Council to report on certain questions. He left Iraq in March 1919 and was afterwards to publish two reports, neither of which brought satisfaction to Wilson. Hewett confirmed, although diplomatically, the view that the British Administration was neither suitable for the post-war conditions in Iraq, nor equipped with an adequate knowledge of the country.⁵ However, Hewett's report was more provocative to Wilson's plans. After assessing the amount due to Army Funds from Civil Revenues at about £2m the Hewett report continues to show that the total net receipts for the past three years was only £500,000.⁶ Thus, Hewett's report suggested that 'It is evident from these figures that the Civil Administration is not likely at an early date to be able to pay the bill set out above'.⁷

Such an argument is highly indicative and very significant. What Hewett

1. Sir Aylmer Haldane, op. cit., pp.20-21.

2. Ibid., p.21.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Sir John P. Hewett, Some Impressions of Mesopotamia in 1919, (London, 1920), p.13

6. The total amount was distributed in the following way: 1915-16, £130,000; 1916-17, £270,000; 1917-18, £100,000.

7. John P. Hewett, Report to the Army Council, (London, 1919), p.40.

was really saying is that Iraq was not after all such a tempting economic investment in as far as the British Empire was concerned.¹ Hewett's report clearly pointed out that Iraq was in fact a financial burden to the Empire. The open publication of such an authoritative view in the midst of the post-war conditions and ideas dominating Britain was hardly an encouragement for the continuation of the occupation.²

(c) The Growth within the British Administration of an 'Independent' Interest and Outlook: This, however, was not the end of Hewett's impact on and in Iraq. In January 1919, while in Baghdad, Hewett gave a lecture at which all British Commissioned and Warrant Officers were invited to attend. In this speech, he openly expressed the view that the British Administration in India was doomed to an early extinction.³ Wilson, months later, was to become more acquainted with such a view when he was to receive a private letter from Hirtzel confirming to him that the idea of an administered British dependency was dying in India and decomposing in Egypt.⁴

Taking into account that most of the British Officials in Iraq were on an administrative loan from the British Civil Service of India, or worse still, had already been demobilized from the forces, and that such a 'pessimistic' view was uttered by an eminent authority, then one is justified in assuming that the direct and logical implication would have led the audience to conclude that employment in Iraq was the last resort. In other words, if Iraq was not a profitable investment to the British Empire, then perhaps it was a promising acquisition for the British Administration in Iraq and its personnel. Such a notion was encouraged by Hewett himself, who wrote:

1. One does not want to get involved in a theoretical discussion on the nature of 'imperialism' or what motivates a nation to acquire or indeed occupy the land of another country (is it sheer economic 'exploitation' as it was argued by Hobson⁽ⁱ⁾ and later by Lenin,⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ or is it imperial politics, strategic interests, or a combination of several elements?).

(i) John A. Hobson, Imperialism, (London, 1947), first published in 1902.

(ii) V.I. Lenin, Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism, (Moscow, 1959), first published in 1916.

2. This argument is elaborated more fully later.

3. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.167.

4. John Marlowe op. cit., p.165.

'The determination /of H.M.G./ - for such I believe it is - to exclude persons from Great Britain and the Dominions from taking part in the development of the country seems to me to be very regrettable ... If Mesopotamia is to take the place it ought to in such enterprises as cotton cultivation, the manufacture of beet sugar, and sheep breeding, the impetus will, in my judgment, have to come from the white man'.¹

The impact of Sir John Hewett's speech on his audience of British Officials, as suggested above, was confirmed by Wilson, who wrote that the speech 'confirmed many waverers in their decision to remain in Iraq if possible'.² And that 'In dealing with the Indian reforms Sir John Hewett had wielded a rhetorical sledgehammer, with devastating effect on his hearers; his views had an obvious application to the scheme for the future Government of Iraq...'.³

Wilson did not explicitly or conspicuously state what was that 'obvious application' of Hewett's views. However, he leaves us little room for doubt. Nevertheless, in his private papers, even such faint doubt is completely cast away. When in early April 1920, Hirtzel wrote to Wilson that the British Government 'are irrevocably committed to an Arab Government'⁴ Wilson replied with these rather revealing words:

'... When the views of H.M.G. as explained by you become known to my Officers they cannot be blamed if they leave a service which has neither honour prospects, permanence hopes of successful accomplishment.

The War Office has demobilized most of them and the Treasury admits no liability for them'.⁵

The Civil Commissioner was neither inventing this fear, among his officers, nor exaggerating it. This apprehension was prevailing and genuine. It was clearly shown in Leachman's letter to Wilson:

'I am honoured by a large correspondence from Political Officers who tell me things I doubt if they would tell you. The majority ... ask me if I consider they are likely to be let down. Some of them consider they have been already ...'.⁶

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1. Sir John Hewett, Some Impressions ..., op. cit., p.19
 2. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.167.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, Miscellaneous Papers, B.M., Serial No.52455, Vol. 1, Private from Hirtzel to Wilson, dated 7th April 1920. Italics mine.
 5. Ibid. Serial No.52456, Vol.2, telegram No. 4386, From C.C. Baghdad to Hirtzell, dated 10th April 1920.
 6. Ibid. Serial No. 52458, Vol.4, letter from Lieut-Col. G.E. Leachman, Mosul, to A.T. Wilson, dated 20th September 1919.

Wilson replied:

'Almost my sole object in sticking to my job here is to see that justice is done to Officers whom I have brought into the Service and induced to stay. It is not I but Government who may let them down, and I regard myself at present as standing between them and Government'.¹

Such a confusion and anxiety were further revealed in an exchange of letters between Lt-Col. Howell (Deputy C.C.) and Major Dickson (P.O. Nāṣiriyaḥ). The former wrote 'I know no more than you do about what is going to happen to this country'. The latter complained that the British Officials were 'kept lamentably in the dark' as to what the Government policy really was about.² During his visit to Baghdad Cox was 'impressed with the necessity for some definite announcement ... to remove doubt ... in the minds of the Officers of the Civil Administration as to their future'.³

With the declaration of the Armistice, the future form of the administration of Iraq became a matter of urgency. However, some British officials thought than an early decision on this question was not vital. Their argument was based on the assumption that 'We can start with a British bureaucracy and gradually water it down with an infusion of Arab staff until it becomes Arab'. Bonham-Carter opposed such a notion and pointed out its 'insuperable difficulties'. He argued that 'against such a change /you have/ the strong vested interests not only of the officials but of others who have flourished under the system, and still stronger vested prejudices'.⁴

This 'economic' interest in attempting to perpetuate the British Administration in Iraq was flanked and strengthened by an 'ideological' conviction of an undisguised faith in British paternalism. In common with other men of similar tradition, Wilson believed that the British Empire was destined

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1. Ibid. Letter from A.T. Wilson to G.E. Leachman, dated 26th September 1919.
 2. Major H.R.P. Dickson, Private Papers and Letters, Middle East Centre, Oxford Univ. DS.77(DS.51.B.3), Box 2A, file II. Letter dated 28th April 1919.
 3. F.O.371/5227/B.7253. 'Summary of Correspondence regarding political situation in Mesopotamia', From C.C. Baghdad No.7693, dated 22nd June 1920.
 4. F.O.882/23/3133, Note on the Place of the Arab in the Administration, Written by E. Bonham-Carter (Judicial Secretary), Strictly Confidential, dated 5th February 1919, Baghdad.

to carry a message of civilization to the backward countries. For such a task, Wilson considered himself as a dedicated man, dedicated to the bearing of 'The White Man's Burden'.¹ In November 1918, Wilson wrote 'The world at large recognizes that it is our duty and our high privilege to establish an effective protectorate and to introduce a form of Government which shall make possible the development of this country'.²

Years later (1930), Wilson gave an account of his beliefs, during 'those strenuous days' of his in Iraq. 'We believed', Wilson wrote, 'that Britain's contribution to the welfare of mankind is to infuse the principles of Christianity into its governance ... that Iraq needed something more than the advantages of material civilization ... We believed that till Iraq was leavened with the principles of Christianity she would be unfit for the exercise of freedom ... the desire to do so inspired many and unconsciously underlay the activities of nearly all British officials'.³

All these documents provide us with sufficient evidence to confirm the conclusion that whereas the British Government lacked an immediate economic motive in Iraq, the British Administration regarded Iraq as an important investment in terms of administrative office and achievement alike. This was of major significance. The two sides, although both of British institutions, conceived the question of the political future of Iraq from totally different angles. Whereas the British Government, in varying degrees of enthusiasm or reluctance, was amenable to the idea of an Iraqi independence and the establishment of an Arab Administration, the British Administration in Iraq had a vested interest in opposing such an ultimate conclusion and in undermining any political or administrative steps which might aid in promoting it. Wilson was not endangering his political and administrative career, by opposing his Government's wishes and sometimes even instructions merely because of his ideological beliefs which characterized him as a 'late Victorian', and a 'convinced Imperialist'. He, in fact, was acting in accordance with the very interests of the administrative structure that he had built and was heading. The very existence

1. J. Marlowe, op. cit., p.21.

2. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., pp.104-5.

3. Ibid, p.114

of such a structure, not to speak of its supremacy of privileges, was threatened by the idea of an Arab administration to be implemented in Iraq.

Such a conclusion leads to another logical implication which would assist in having better comprehension of the nationalist movement in Iraq. According to the above-mentioned factors, one could deduce that the essential contradiction in Iraq was not basically between Arab nationalists, or, to be more accurate, the bulk of them, and the British Government as such. The major conflict was between Arab nationalists and the British Administration functioning in Iraq.

Furthermore, it explains the extraordinary capacity of the British Government in assuming a conciliatory role towards Iraqi nationalists after the uprising. The Cairo Conference shaped a new political formula which safeguarded British interests in Iraq, while, at the same time, it met some of the nationalists' demands. Had the British Government been a direct part of the political conflict in Iraq, then the Iraqi nationalist movement would have assumed a more 'radical' form of anti-Western nationalism. Perhaps on the lines first propagated by al Afghāni and advocated by al Maṣri. Such a line did not lack its supporters in Iraq: al Hāshimi, al Shīrāzi, abu al Timman, al Ghulāmi ... etc., all of whom were ardent advocates of complete termination of any form of British presence in Iraq. However, two factors accounted for the failure of such a radical line: the military defeat of the forces of the uprising; and the swift intervention and the relative impartiality of the British Government. Once an Arab Administration, with its promising prospects, was in the making 'radicalism' faded away and 'moderation' gained ground.

Furthermore, Lord Curzon indicatively allowed the Sunday Times to publish certain correspondence between himself and Mr. Ormsby-Gore (then Member of Parliament and later Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies). In this correspondence, Lord Curzon declared that the whole of his actions and opinions had been aimed at the speedy establishment of an Arab Government in Mesopotamia. 'While defending to the best of his ability the band of Anglo-Indian officials in Mesopotamia he wished it to be clearly understood that

neither /H.M.G.7 nor he in any way sympathized with the Indianization or Anglicization of Mesopotamia, nor with the introduction of bureaucratic administration into the country'.¹

Wilson was fully aware of such British tendencies, but in a spirit of a Crusader-knight, he wrote to a friend in September 1919:

'I am not loved in the India Office, I should think by now, I shall be less loved before long. They seem determined to do this country down if they can by making suitable political arrangements, and I have no intention of allowing them to do it, if it can be prevented by anything that I can say or do ...'.²

Thus, one could conclude that the very structure of the Administration in Iraq, being overwhelmingly dominated by British personnel (1914-1920), was to produce three unfavourable results:

(a) It had provoked a reaction of discontent to the feelings, ideas and interests in the educated indigenous people. Thus created a suitable target for national agitation. In September 1920, Gertrude Bell wrote:

'The underlying truth of all criticism is however - and it's what makes the critics so difficult to answer - that we had promised self-governing institutions, and not only made no step towards them but were busily setting up something entirely different. One of the papers says, quite rightly, that we had promised an Arab Government with British Advisers, and had set up a British Government with Arab Advisers. That's a perfectly fair statement...'³

(b) Such an Administration, being relatively ignorant of the country's language and traditions, was unable to provide forthcoming and decisive solutions to the acute and prevailing problems of Iraq.

(c) This Administration was gradually to develop its semi-independent interests and consequently political outlooks which did not always echo that of the British Government. On several occasions the views and indeed the conduct of the Administration were to run counter to the wishes of the British Government.

1. Sunday Times, 20th September 1920.

2. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, Miscellaneous Papers, B.M., No.52456, Vol.2. dated 15th September 1919. *Italics mine.*

3. Lady Bell (ed)., op. cit., Vol.II, letter dated 27th September, 1920, p.502.

C H A P T E R IX

THE TAXATION SYSTEM AND THE FINANCIAL POLICY OF
THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN IRAQ

It is self-evident that one of the most important factors in deciding the position of an administration vis-à-vis its ruled population is the financial policy which such an administration adopts. The task of this chapter is to examine the British financial policy, its methods, motives and political consequences. Furthermore it will attempt to show on which sections of the society the burden of taxation was falling heavily.

The Rise of Revenues: In the first place, it is evident that the Iraqis were paying a higher rate of taxation during the British era than the Turkish one. This is clearly shown in the following table:

TABLE

Year	Receipts	Year	Receipts
	£		£
1889-90	757,125 ¹	1919-20	3,795,500 or 5,727,194 ³
1910-11	1,653,075 ²	1920-21	4,970,155 or 7,105,210 ⁴

In other words, receipts had been trebled in the period between the two eras. The Wilayat of Baghdad⁵ paid in 1909 a land revenue of Rs.33,11,412. In 1919, the same revenue amounted to Rs.114,45,500 which means that it was also trebled.⁶

This large increase in taxation between the Turkish and the British eras was accompanied by a parallel increase in taxes and revenues within the period of direct British rule over Iraq (1914-1921). Such an argument finds its ample justification in the Administrative Reports concerning that period.

For instance, the revenue collected from the Saniyah land of Basrah in

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1. S. Haider, op. cit., (Ph.D. Thesis, L.S.E.), Appendix X, p.702.
 2. Ibid.
 3. C.O.696/3. Budget Estimates for the year 1920-21, p.vii, Figure originally given in Rupees which was equivalent to something between one shilling and six old pence and two shillings to a Rupee.
 4. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.224. Figure given in Rupees.
 5. Comprised the British Administrative divisions of Sāmārā', Baghdad, Kut, Dīwaniyah, Shāmiyah, Ḥillah, Rūmādī, Ba'qubah and Khānīqīn.
 6. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report of the Revenue Dept. 1919, p.5. This increase was justified in the British report by 1) extension and improvement of irrigation; 2) consequent expansion of agriculture; 3) greater security; 4) rise in prices of agricultural produce; and 5) more equitable collection.

1915 was Rs.1,26,984. In 1919 it amounted to Rs.3,27,296.¹ Basrah's figures suggest that in 1917-1918 its revenue (customs excluded) was Rs.17,89,265. In 1918-1919 it had grown to Rs.21,99,301,² . i.e. an annual increase of Rs.4,10,036 a year, or some 22 per cent rise a year. Compared with other parts of Iraq, the Basrah increase of revenue receipts was of a moderate scale: in one year the yield of the kodah tax alone had more than doubled.³

Between 1918 and 1919, the revenue of the palm trees of Shāmiyah Division nearly trebled.⁴ During 1917-1918, Sāmarrā' paid a total of Rs.39,275, of which Rs.29,754 was a land revenue. In the following year, 1918-1919, Sāmarrā' had to bear the cost of Rs.2,02,397 of which Rs.1,65,449 came from land duty.⁵ Thus Sāmarrā' had to increase its payment by 550 per cent.

The Assistant Political Officer of Kufah and Najaf reported that, 'there has been a marked progress of both municipalities [Najaf and Kufah] this year [1919]. Last year's receipts amounted to Rs.38,773 in Kufah as against Rs. 48,802 total collection for 8 months in 1919, vis, April to November; and Rs.59,229 in Najaf, as against Rs.66,750 from April to November 1919. Most increase is due to the introduction of Wharfage and House Tax in Kufah, and House Tax in Najaf'.⁶ Najaf had in 1918 paid twice as much as it did in 1917, and the Kufah revenue of 1918 was three times as much as that which was paid in 1917.⁷

Taxation in the Muntafiq division was more remarkable in its increase. Muntafiq revenue receipts had accelerated in the following way:

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1. C.O.696/2. Basrah District Annual Report, 1919, p.62.
 2. Ibid., p.59.
 3. C.O.696/2. Kodah Revenue Annual Report, 1919, p.2. In 1917-1918 the Kodah revenue was Rs.9,98,739. In 1918-1919, it was stepped up to Rs.22,57,755. The Kodah was a tax levied on animals.
 4. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports 1918, Shamiyah Division, p.74. It was increased from Rs.95,000 to Rs.2,50,000.
 5. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports 1918, Samara Division, p.5.
 6. C.O.696/2. Shamiyah Division Annual Report, 1919, p.18. Report of A.P.O. Kufah and Najaf in original.
 7. C.O.692/1. Admin. Report, 1918, Kufah and Najaf, p.89. It is important to point out that the war was ended in late 1918. This fact gives an economic justification to the Administration. Nevertheless it does not eliminate the political impact involved in such an increase.

TABLE

District	1915-1916	1916-1917	1917-1918	1918-1919	1919-1920
Qal'at Sikar	-	-	-	-	2,76,794
Shatrah	-	-	-	38,624	3,61,910
Nasiriyah	11,341	15,403	70,395	1,01,127	2,45,044
Suq al Shuyakh	22,216	37,061	64,744	3,26,219	4,17,791
TOTAL	33,557	52,464	1,35,139	4,65,970	13,01,539 ¹

Methods behind the rise of revenues: It is most unlikely that such an exceptional² increase of revenue could be justified by any claimed economic improvement in the conditions of the areas. This upward curve in revenue was 'due to the fact that officers in charge have been able to gain more knowledge as to the prices of dates, auctions, and local business transactions generally'.³ It is obvious that the improvement in the revenue was not related to a rapid growth of productivity or prices, as much as to the progressing administrative efficiency and its improvement in financial supervision.

An administrative report referred the increase in the revenue to the fact that:

'... Some two generations ago Midhat Pasha decided to abolish the method of annual assessment of crops in favour of a fixed rate. He took the figures of revenue for the last ten years and accepted the average on such figures as the land tax ... Unfortunately ... figures were based on the more or less faked records of the Turkish Revenue Department. Our aim in the future is double. First to raise the revenue ... Second to assess it on productive value of trees, quality of soil, price of crop'.⁴

This leaves no doubt that the increase in the collected revenue was due to the new methods employed and the incorruptible character of the Administration. Furthermore it was pointed out that the introduction of new taxes had a role in the improvement of the revenue.⁵

1. C.O.696/2. Muntafiq Division Annual Report 1919, Appendix (G), p.31. Municipalities revenues not included. With them the figure was Rs.16,61,823.
2. Muntafiq Revenue was decreased in 1922-23 to Rs.3,68,508. Report of the Accountant General, 1922-1923 (Baghdad, 1924), pp.11-12.
3. C.O.696/2. Basrah District Annual Report, 1919, p.62.
4. Ibid, p.10
5. C.O.696/1. Admin. Report, 1918, Kufah and Najaf, p.245.

Moreover, it is evident that such a remarkable increase in the amount of the revenue was also due to the extension of efficient revenue collection into areas which had previously escaped payment. What is striking is the failure to consider the political consequences of such a policy. The ability of the Administration in extending and enforcing its taxation into tribal areas is a subject of vital importance. It will be examined in the next chapter.

In the previous pages, the large increase of taxation and revenue has been clearly shown. However, this phenomenon was not confined only to the above-mentioned areas. It holds true to all of Iraq. This was conspicuously manifested in the annual revenue receipts (of all Iraq) which were as follows¹ (in Rupees):

TABLE

Main Headings	1915-1916	1916-1917	1917-1918	1918-1919	1919-1920
Land Revenue and General Taxes on agricultural produce ²	22,55,967	21,86,555	79,34,295	217,47,430	198,27,290
Customs	18,34,497	57,64,400	67,38,000	65,00,000	220,24,000
Other Resources ³	1,78,178	1,37,265	5,79,753	10,65,750	76,85,220
TOTAL	45,68,642	81,08,250	152,52,048	293,13,180	498,36,510 ⁴ or 572,71,940 ⁴

The above figures⁵ clearly demonstrate two facts:

1. Within five years of British occupation, the Administration revenue had drastically increased. In the years after the Armistice, the total amount levied from Iraqi taxpayers was also increasing.
2. The above figures also reveal that the burden of taxation had fallen heavily on two items: the land (cultivators and settled tribes), and customs (the merchant classes). Other resources were of very marginal contribution.

1. Cmd. 1061, op. cit., p.118.

2. Date tax, Kodah, Tapu.

3. Judicial, Medical, Education, Posts, telegraphs, Jails, Labour supplies, Newspapers, transport and Miscellaneous.

4. Figures above taken from actual receipts given in Budget Estimates 1920-1921, p.ii. C.O.696/3.

5. The total receipts from 1920-21 were Rs.666,68,740, of which Rs.218,16,290 were collected from land produce, and Rs.257,82,000 were derived from Customs. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.224.

Channels of expenditure: It had been argued that Iraqis were receiving

- Administrative services equivalent to their tax payments. This brings into question the directions in which the Administration considered it suitable to spend the revenue. The Administration yearly expenditure was as follows¹

(in Rupees):

TABLE

Main Headings	1915-16	1916-17	1917-18	1918-19	1919-20 ²
1. Headquarter Administrative Expenditure ³	5,54,230	11,83,425	24,18,253	33,90,100	73,60,714
2. Political Officer's Revenue Establishment	5,48,892	9,19,085	51,89,233	93,21,690	70,67,420
3. Customs	1,11,893	3,85,800	5,80,350	6,75,000	29,64,169
4. Transport	-	-	-	-	30,87,834
5. Judicial	1,20,207	1,27,295	2,14,983	3,73,000	8,21,145
6. Medical	61,345	87,180	1,39,887	4,63,750	20,31,542
7. Education	6,500	23,530	35,500	1,80,000	8,86,808
8. Police	1,99,146	2,86,975	8,90,163	12,04,080	22,71,389
9. Jails	20,126	44,460	98,517	1,67,400	5,44,304
10. Public Works	-	1,05,450	4,61,400	8,74,700	49,63,292
11. Posts	-	-	-	-	23,74,831
12. Telegraphs	-	-	-	-	8,19,868
13. Survey	-	-	-	-	94,859
14. Irrigation	-	-	-	-	38,78,605
15. Agriculture	-	-	-	-	3,81,738
16. Levies	-	-	-	-	66,49,490
TOTAL	16,22,344	31,63,200	100,28,286	166,49,720	461,98,008

Before analysing the Administration's Budget of Receipts and Expenditures, perhaps it is fair and useful to become acquainted with Wilson's explanations for his financial policy. The discussion of the Budget would then assume a more comprehensive character, as it would be based against the Administration's

1. Cmd.1061, op. cit., p.119.

2. C.O.696/3. Budget Estimates, 1920-21, p.iii. Figures given in Budget Estimates are actual expenditure for the year 1919-20. They vary from those given in Cmd. 1061, Review ..., op. cit., 119.

3. Include Salaries of Gazetted Officers, Secret Service, subsistence allowance, Sea Passages, Telegrams ..., etc.

justifications. Once the uprising took place in Iraq, the taxation policy was put in the forefront of factors to be blamed for the outbreak of violence. The Administration was at pains to refute such a relationship between the taxation system and the uprising. The Civil Commissioner despatched a long telegram, dated 21st July 1920, to the India Office defending his financial policy.

In the first place, Wilson pointed out that certain Turkish taxes were discontinued and that 'no fresh taxes were imposed'. He emphasised that the Turkish rates of taxation were preserved and even reduced in cases of calamities reported and proved. He pointed out that demands as formulated everywhere were 'collected practically in full and without undue delay or difficulty those who know the Arabs will realise that this fact alone suffices to discredit charges of over taxation'. Wilson went on to justify the increase in revenues on grounds of extension and improvement of irrigation, consequent expansion of agriculture and enormous rise in prices of agricultural product. He argued that 'Outbreak began in two districts which in 1919 and previous years got off very lightly ... These areas in Turkish times were quite out of control and paid practically no revenue'.¹

A few days later, the Civil Commissioner wired further 'observations' on the financial aspects of his policy. He argued that large increase in receipts during 1920 was wrongly attributed to rapid growth of taxation 'whereas really due largely to payment for augmented services rendered by Civil Administration to ... the Army'. In return for their payments, the Iraqis were, Wilson claimed, receiving large and direct benefits from the Administration.²

Wilson's defence of his taxation policy could not escape an obvious over-enthusiasm. Within less than a month of the above telegram, the Civil Commissioner was to admit the 'loss by the Civil Administration of that degree of popularity which it first enjoyed'.³ To explain this 'loss of popularity'

1. F.O.371/5076. tele. No.8284, 21st July 1920.

2. F.O.371/5077. tele. No. 8934, 24th July 1920.

3. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.312.

which paved the way for the 1920 insurrection, he gave several factors among which were 'collection of land revenue and other taxes', 'fear of exploitation by western commercialism', 'use of aeroplanes against recalcitrants', and 'demands for labour on flood banks ... In this matter circumstances of military occupation have been partly responsible. We have throughout been, and indeed still are, subjected to considerable legitimate pressure from the military authorities ...'.¹

The essence of Wilson's argument could be summed up by the following points. Rates of taxation under British rule were but similar to those imposed during the Turkish era. Increase of revenue was achieved by efficiency, justice and was also due to the economic prosperity taking place in Iraq. In the meantime, Wilson claimed, Iraqis were getting better services in return for their payments.

In the first place, it is clear that the very structure of the argument itself is predominated by certain notions which had virtually undermined the logic of the discussion. Wilson confused the political issue with the moral one. And in regard to the latter issue, Wilson also confused Western values with Oriental moral principles. The duty of every citizen to pay taxes is, broadly speaking, a moral obligation which had been introduced into Europe through certain economic, social and political developments.² Such was not the case of the oriental Ottoman society. The Oriental state had not been considered, by its subjects, as the embodiment of the people's will or interests. It had rather been regarded, with some undeniable justification, as an alien, parasitic and oppressive body. Every method, deceit and bribery not excluded, was resorted to in order to defeat the law and evade taxation. Such was the moral code of an Oriental society. To imply post-Rousseau and advanced European concepts of duty on a different society was an open invitation for political unrest.

1. Ibid.

2. Lord Acton, History of Freedom and Other Essays, (London, 1919), p.19.

Nonetheless, the British Administration could have modified such an opposition if it had carried out a policy of expenditure directed to meet the urgent social needs of Iraq at large. This was what the Civil Commissioner claimed to have been the case. However, the Iraq Budgets do not encourage such a claim.

In the first place, one finds a yearly increase in the budget surpluses occurring in every year of British occupation. The following table shows such surpluses in Rupees.

TABLE

Year	Surplus	Year	Surplus
1915-16	29,46,298	1918-19	176,63,745
1916-17	49,45,050	1919-20	111,73,932
1917-18	52,23,762		

Furthermore, the examination of the annual expenditure from 1915 onward reveals some more disturbing points. They indicate that the bulk of the revenue was allocated to 'administrative expenses' rather than to Departments of direct and tangible benefit to the public. And that in every year administrative expenses had increased at a highly drastic rate. The following table casts a light on the above-mentioned points.

TABLE

	Administrative expenses ¹ in Rupees	Departments of Medical, Education Irrigation and agriculture, in Rupees
1915-1916	11,03,122	67,845
1916-1917	21,02,510	1,11,710
1917-1918	76,07,486	1,75,387
1918-1919	127,11,790	6,43,750
1919-1920	144,28,134	71,78,693

The absence of any expenditure for irrigation and agriculture prior to 1919 is explained by the fact that those departments were under the direct control of the Military Authorities rather than the Civil Administration. However, this fact indicates that whatever services were rendered to such

1. This item includes only (i) Headquarters Administrative Expenditure, and (ii) Political Officers Revenue Establishment.

departments, before 1919, were in the final analysis to facilitate and serve military purposes. Sir John Hewett, in his previously-mentioned report, confirms such an impression:

'We are unanimously and emphatically of the opinion that there is no ground for the suggestion that the expenditure of Army funds has been prompted by the desire to provide for after-peace developments, and we consider that they have been uniformly expended with the primary object of securing the efficiency and comfort of the force'.¹

The Civil Commissioner, in his previously-mentioned telegram claimed that the large increase in receipts during 1919 and 1920 was wrongly attributed to rapid growth of taxation. Wilson argued that such an increase was 'due largely to payments for augmented services rendered by Civil Administration to other departments, chiefly the Army'. Sir John Hewett's argument specified the nature of such services. Furthermore, by examining the figures of the 1920-1921 budget, one finds that Wilson's argument is hardly justified. The total revenue of that year amounted to Rs.666,68,740, of which only Rs.56,00,000 came from the Army. This figure was divided into Rs.35,00,000 as payment for revenue for grain sold to the Army, Rs.18,00,000 as a contribution from the Army for quasi-military duties of Levies and Police. Only Rs.3,00,000 was a contribution from the Army towards the upkeep of roads.²

In 1919 the Departments of Irrigation and Agriculture were transferred to the control of the Civil Administration,³ yet the expenditure of such vital departments remained rather unimpressive. In 1919-1920, irrigation expenditure was Rs.38,78,605, and only Rs.3,81,738 was devoted to agriculture. This formed only some 22 per cent of the Land Revenue, and some 9 per cent of the total expenditure of that year. In 1920-1921, irrigation expenditure was increased to Rs.57,17,000 and agriculture expenditure increased to Rs.6,77,000.⁴ In spite of this increase, irrigation and agricultural expenditure remained to represent only the same previous modest percentage of Agricultural Revenue,

1. Sir John Hewett, Report..., op. cit., p.27

2. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.224.

3. Ibid., p.158

4. Ibid., p.224.

which went up to Rs.218,16,290 and the total expenditure which increased to Rs.710,52,100.¹

All of this was performed under the peculiar conditions whereby such vital departments as the Education and Medical did not account for more than 6 per cent of the total expenditure of 1919-1920. In the previous years it was even less than that figure. In 1919, the Education expenditure represented only 1.9 per cent of the total expenditure. It is true that this department had opened some new schools,² however, it is equally true that the number of students attending schools in 1919 was less than the number of students in 1914.³ It should be remembered that the British had in fact inherited 'a fairly comprehensive system of education based on European methods'.⁴ In regard to education, it is sufficient to recall what Gertrude Bell, in May 1920, had to say:

'... We /Capt. A. Lionel Smith⁵ and G. Bell⁷ had a long ... talk about the education of Arabs. I am not quite happy about what we're doing; nor is he. It's all very well to say we mustn't start secondary schools till we have really first-rate material, both in teachers and pupils, but we can't wait for that ... the people here are so immensely keen to be provided with higher education that if we hold back they will think we are doing it on purpose to keep them back. You have to look at it from the point of politics as well as of education'.⁶

The Motives behind such a policy: This administrative conduct of harsh taxation coupled with the hardly wise or fair expenditure, invites the question as to the motives behind such a financial policy. This could be explained by the obvious impact of the Indian administrative tradition, the attempt at the establishment

1. Ibid.

Wilson's argument that irrigation had extended and improved during British occupation is not totally justified by Irrigation Expenditure. In 1919 only Rs.12,27,000 was spent on new works, Rs.3,44,000 on flood protection the rest of the expenditure was devoted to maintenance of old projects. CO.696/2. Admin. Reports, Department of Revenue, 1919, p.135, Appendix L.

2. C.O.696/1. Administrative Report of Education, 1918, p.10; also C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports Department of Education 1919, p.7.

3. Number of Iraqi students in 1914 was 19,499, including some 1,338 in military schools. 'Abd al Razzaq al Hillali, op. cit., pp.248-252. Number of Iraqi students in 1919 was 6,317 of whom 3,308 were Sunnis, 1,725 Shi'is, 937 Christians and 330 Jews. C.O.696/2 Admin. Reports Dept. of Education, 1919, p.8, App.1.

4. Ibid., p.1.

5. Captain A.L. Smith was then Director of Education of Baghdad.

6. Lady Bell, The Letters ..., op. cit., Vol.II, p.487, dated 9th May 1920.

of a colonial administration and the favouring of the Administration's personnel. In addition to that and at the core of such a policy, there was another major factor. Wilson exposed the essence of his taxation policy when he pointed out that without such a policy, 'enhanced burden would have fallen on British tax payers who would have had to make up the deficit'.¹

Wilson was caught up in a vicious circle: in post-war Britain there prevailed a genuine anxiety as to any unnecessary expenditure. Time and again the 'Mesopotamian' financial situation was raised in the House of Commons. The British Government was eager to assure Parliament that the Iraqi finance was self-supporting and that no subsidies were given to its Administration from the British Government or the Government of India.²

Here again we are confronted with the relevant implications generated by the conflict of interests and views among British policy makers, a large number of whom were opposed to the financial burden involved in the continuing occupation of Iraq.³ 'I strongly suspect that several times in the past 12 months financial considerations must have tempted them /H.M.G./ to abandon this place /Iraq/'.⁴ Without such a pressure Wilson might not have been obliged to embark on his injudicious financial policy.

It seems that this heavy taxation and extravagant annual surpluses were motivated to provide an ample assurance. Wilson, in his attempts to reconcile his desire of British control over Iraq with the British resentment of any new financial burden, had no option but to squeeze the Iraqis to the utmost.⁵

1. F.O.371/5076 No.8284, dated 21st July 1920.

2. For instance see: Parliamentary Debates, H.C., Vol.119, p.1925 dated 18th August 1919; also, Vol.130, p.2234, 1920; also Vol.132, p.1191, 27th July 1920.

3. Ibid. Also see J. Hewett Report Supra, p/94-5. Also British Press attitude, Infra, p 404-5.

4. A.T. Wilson, Letters 1903-1921, Vol.2. London Library letter dated 22.2.1920.

5. Wilson's other option was to 'tempt' the British Government to the fact that 'the capital value of the Oil Fields in Mesopotamia is £50 million ... ports, steamers, railway, roads and buildings, built by British capital ... count for another ten millions. Imports this year are about ten millions mainly British ... the /Anglo-French/ declaration as it stands affords little guarantee for a stable government, upon the existence of which depends the retention and development of these assets'.

F.O.371/4183. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 21st July 1919, No.8169

However, such a policy was to back-fire. It proved to be highly provocative and formed an important factor behind the outburst of 1920 which had cost the British a very high financial and political price.¹ This in its turn was an essential element in urging the British Government to pursue a better (cheaper) solution which by necessity was to exclude Wilson and sweep away his plans.

The Social Content of the Taxation Policy and its Political Impact: It has been argued that Iraq, during British occupation, had undergone a phase of economic prosperity and was flourishing. This was supposed to justify the high taxation and minimize the importance of the economic factor in the political unrest of Iraq. However, such an argument, authentic as it may be, evades some very essential questions. Prosperity is not supposed to be used in absolute or abstract terms; it could not bestow its gifts on the whole of a society which was composed of different social groups and geographic areas. To consider the question in concrete terms, it is right to ask, cui bono? and who was 'paying the bill'?

The yearly receipts of the Administration from 1915 to 1920 reveal that the bulk of taxation was falling on two items; agricultural produce and customs. Together, those two items had, approximately, formed the following percentage of the total receipts:

Year	%	Year	%	Year	%
1915-16	95.7	1917-18	96.0	1919-20	83.4
1916-17	98.7	1918-19	96.5	1920-21	71.5 ²

Thus the burden of taxation had fallen heavily on the, socially speaking, Iraqi fellāhin and merchants.

This overall conclusion has led not a few Iraqi intellectuals to suggest that the Iraqi rising was urged and led by the commercial 'bourgeoisie'.³ Dr.

1. The uprising of 1920 cost the British treasury some £40m.

2. Calculated by the writer.

3. For example see the following articles: (i) 'Ali al Tala'fari, al Thawra al 'Irāqiya al Kubra, Dirāssāt 'Arabiya, Vol.5, No.12, (Beirut, 1969), pp.123-4; (ii) 'Ali al Tala'fari, 'Awāmel Ikhfaq al Thawra al 'Irāqiya, Dirāssāt 'Arabiya, Vol.7, No.3, (Beirut, 1971), pp.58-9; (iii) 'Ali al Nuri, Ta'lig ḥawl Tabi' al Thawrat al 'Ashrīn al Watāniya fi al 'Irāq, Dirāssāt 'Arabiya, Vol.6, No.4. (Beirut, 1970), pp.89-92.

M.S. Hassan, an economist Iraqi authority, accepted and advocated such a conclusion.¹ This deduction, which dominated contemporary Iraqi literature, is worth a challenge, both from an economic and historical point of view.

With due respect, one would like to point out that such a deduction seems to have been motivated by loyalty to marxist dogma rather than to deep observation of Iraqi political conditions of 1920. It was the Iraqi intelligentsia (ex-officers, ex-officials and men of education), the Mid-Euphrates tribes and Shi'ah 'Ullemā' who were the rank and file of the Iraqi uprising of 1920. One could hardly trace a 'militant' role being practised by the so-called Iraqi 'bourgeoisie'. Furthermore, the above-mentioned 'deduction' appears to be the product of a rash, or one-sided, examination of the taxation policy and not the fruit of a deep analysis of the social content of the taxation policy. The following table will help to show that in actual fact the burden of taxation was falling more on the fellāhin than on the merchants, and that taxes on Commerce were within reasonable and tolerable limits.

TABLE

Year	Value of Export and Imports of Iraq	Customs Revenue	Revenue of Land and Agricultural products
	£	£	£
1910 (Turks)	2,962,500 or 3,950,000	380,624	527,175
1918 (British)	8,325,000 or 11,100,000	487,500 or 650,000	1,631,057 ² or 2,174,743

This table discloses that in eight years agricultural revenue was trebled, whereas the custom revenue remained virtually the same against a background of which the commercial value was approximately trebled, or, to be more precise, had, in eight years, increased by a percentage of 285.

It is true that the Iraqi mercantile class had to increase its payments of customs taxes: in 1919 this revenue amounted to £1,651,800 (or £2,202,400). But in the same year the value of export and import goods had risen to £13,800,000

1. Dr. M.S. Hassan, Al 'Āmal al Iqtisādi fi al Thawra al 'Irāqiya, (Baghdad, 1958), pp.14, 23-4.

2. Figures of 1910 cited from S. Haider, op. cit., p.701; for 1918 calculated from Cmd.1061, op. cit., p.118.

(or £18,400,000). Nonetheless it is equally true that Iraqi merchants were increasing their profits in a way equivalent, perhaps higher, to their payments. Gertrude Bell gave the following yearly values of export and import goods of Basrah and Baghdad (figures in Lacs of Rupees).

TABLE

1910	395	1915	94	1918	1,110
1912	398	1917	625	1919	1,840 ¹

One should also bear in mind that taxation on Iraqi merchants was, politically speaking, of less alarming consequences than that on land. The social structure of merchants did not allow successful resistance, and the economic nature of commerce made the collection of revenue a much easier and disciplined task. One also assumes that the opening of the commercial route to Persia must have met the approval of the Baghdadi merchants.² In addition to that, the existence of a huge army of occupation, representing a consuming force, must have helped in the flourishing of trade.

The overall situation was, thus, favourable to the Iraqi merchant class, more especially to their upper strata. This is not to deny the existence of some grievances which, however, were of minor character and did not amount to a revolutionizing process.

The Turks were trying to protect the local industry and commerce by imposing high rates of import duties.³ However, once Basrah was occupied, a flow of imported goods (mainly British) was to sweep the Iraqi markets.⁴ The major imported item was textiles.⁵ It was because of such an irresistible competition that the local Iraqi industry and commerce (humble as they were) were to be

1. Ibid.

2. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.88.

3. Supra, p.12.

4. For instance in 1912, Basrah imported Rs.398,10,000. In 1918 this was increased to Rs.1,110,26,854.

C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports 1918 of Certain Depts. of the C.A. of the Occupied Territories. VI. Basrah Customs Report for year ending 31st December 1918.

5. For instance in 1917, textile items formed Rs.283,00,000. In 1918 they formed Rs.543,00,000.

suffocated.¹ This indicates that the British policy had some damaging effect on the local Iraqi industry and commerce. However, such economic activities were very modest in their scope and personnel.² The larger sections involved in commerce were, economically, benefitting from the lift of high import duties and, politically, getting more sympathetic toward British policy and presence.

Moreover, the Civil Commissioner stated that he had discontinued the collection of some major Turkish taxes, namely, property tax Werko, profession tax Temettu, military service, bedel 'Askeriya, and communication tax.³ In 1910-11, property tax amounted to £44,850, profession tax totalled £29,625, bedel 'Askeriya paid £52,125 and communication tax was £39,900.⁴ Altogether those taxes formed a considerable amount of one-ninth of the total revenue of that year (£1,653,075). It is obvious that such revenues were derived from rich Iraqis. The abolishing of such taxes reveals certain aspects of the social content of the Administration's financial policy, namely its benevolent treatment of the rich families.

This economic policy was bound to produce a series of political reactions. The Administration provoked the animosity of the intelligentsia (mainly centred in Baghdad and Mosul), but it gained the gratitude of the merchants. Thus it was logical that whereas the Iraqi intelligentsia was assuming a nationalist and an anti-British attitude, the merchants were to depart from their 'nationalist' stance taken during the Turkish period and to assume a pro-British line. In 1918, Wilson described the political inclinations prevailing in Iraq: 'The merchant and landowners ... viewed the attitude of the intelligentsia of Baghdad with suspicion; they disclaimed any sympathy with or interest in king Husain

1. In the late 19th Century Iraqi weavers numbered 3,500. In 1920 they fell to some few hundred. No Iraqi textile firms could withstand the pressure and all were liquidated.

M.S. Hassan, Tatawwur..., op. cit., pp.283-4.

2. Supra, pp. 2, 11.

3. F.O.371/5076. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O., dated 21st July 1920. No.8284.

4. S. Haider, op. cit., p.702.

and the Sharifian party ...'.¹

In early 1919, the Civil Commissioner attributed the pro-British attitude of Basrah's merchants to their 'flourishing trade and prosperity'.² In late 1919, the Political Officer of Basrah wrote: 'I do not think we are as popular in some ways, especially among certain classes, as were our Turkish predecessors'. However, he pointed out that 'On the other hand the land-owning and commercial classes want us to stay and feel that British rule alone will help them'.³ The Assistant Political Officer of Basrah Sanjaq pointed out that 'the extension of taxation and its increasing burden are naturally making some regret the days of the accommodating Turks'. He, furthermore, referred to 'certain dissatisfaction because the Arabs had no voice in the Administration of the country'. He also pointed to the 'fairly active pro-Sharifian group'. Nevertheless, he asserted that to 'both these classes [merchants and landlords] the British Government stands for safety and security'.⁴ In late 1920, Cox reported that the merchants and landowners of Basrah 'contemplate with some dismay the prospect of Arab Government and urge that it would be a betrayal on our part ...'.⁵

All this makes it amply clear that the Iraqi merchants were strongly in support of the British Administration which treated them favourably. If that was the case who then was carrying the burden of taxation? In the next chapter it will be suggested that it was the Iraqi fellāhīn who were carrying this burden and who were the second major group (in addition to the Intelligentsia) to be provoked by the Administration into joining the independence movement.

1. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.92.

2. F.O.371/23/MES/19/7. Tele. no.1076 dated 26th January 1919.

3. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report Basrah 1919, pp.25-6.

4. Ibid., p.59.

5. F.O.371/5231/13471, tele. no. 12986 dated 26th October 1920.

CHAPTER X

THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND THE IRAQI FELLĀHĪN

It is well known that the rising of 1920 was essentially a peasant revolt which occurred in the area known as the Mid-Euphrates. Less well-known are the conditions which generated such a turning point in the modern history of Iraq. The significance of the events was of major importance to both the nationalist movement and to the forms of political peasantry activities alike.

The Iraqi independence movement which had gathered a high political momentum in 1920 was articulated, led and inspired by a group of Iraqi Arab nationalists who were mainly resident in the large towns of Iraq or abroad. Nevertheless, without the actual initiative of the Mid-Euphrates tribes in breaking out the rising, the independence movement would have lacked effective power. The discontented intelligentsia would have been imprisoned within the boundaries of petitions, border harrassments and prolonged negotiations conducted with an unsympathetic Administration. In short, it was those thousands of fellāhīn who, through their stormy rising, had rendered the independence movement its striking arm which, in the final analysis, was its most effective lever.

Such a deduction defies the assumption which considers the movement as a chaotic mutiny by anarchist tribes incited by outside agitators. The latter notion is based on the assumption which considers Iraqi tribes as a marginal social force which existed outside the national system. It underestimates their political awareness, and confuses the previous tribal disorders with the rising of 1920. It will be suggested (in this chapter and the next) that Iraqi tribes were gradually driven to be integrated within the national, socio-political Iraqi structure. Their political awareness will be examined in a different chapter.

It is true that peasantry strife was not new in Iraq. But what was novel about the 1920 revolt was its 'national' character and aspiration. This was

clearly displayed by five facts: the rising was the product of a collective and wide tribal unity; it was directed against the central authority; its demands and slogans were those of the 'independence movement'; it was conducted in conjunction with the nationalists and the Shi'i 'ulemā'; and finally it had effected the national political development of Iraq.

Nevertheless, it ought to be pointed out that the fellāhīn movement and the 'nationalist' one were not necessarily identical. Each of them had retained its own dynamics and aims. It was due to a certain socio-political and historical development that the two movements were to achieve certain unity and interaction. However, such a process did not amount to the full unification of the two components of the independence movement. In short Iraqi fellāhīn were approaching the stage of national consciousness and action but did not by-pass its preliminary juncture.

The task of this chapter is to define the term fellāhīn, to examine the motives behind their engagement in politics and to trace the historical process of their political intervention on a national scale. The next chapter will carry more elaboration on the subject. All of this will be examined against the background of the outlined British Administration policy.

The participation of peasantry in 'politics', its motives, methods, dimensions and consequences are subjects that have been claiming a wide interest and research.¹ However, the subject is still far from assuming a unified outlook. For some writers, peasantry are the pioneers of a new human era. They 'alone are revolutionary' and 'proletariat of our times'.² To others, peasantry are the 'barbarians',³ a 'class that represents the barbarism within civilization'.⁴ Even to rather sympathetic eyes the peasantry were considered as 'a brake on the

1. For instance see the works of M. Beqiraj, B. Galeski, E.J. Hobsbaum, N.G. Ranga, E.R. Wolf, P. Worsley, listed in bibliography,

2. Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, (London, 1967), p.47

3. Maxim Gorky, 'The Barbarians', in T. Shanin (ed.), Peasants and Peasant Societies, (Middlesex, 1971), pp.369-71.

4. K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol.1, (London, 1959), p.159.

revolution'.¹ Some other writers argued that peasantry possess 'two souls' or 'dual position', one for progress and social solidarity, the other for stagnation and narrow selfish individualism.²

In this work and on several occasions, it has been pointed out that life and reality are richer than any generalization or abstract concepts. This holds true particularly of Iraqi fellāhīn; a highly complex social structure with enormous dissimilarities. From several angles, one could distinguish between those who relied on irrigation and those who depended on rain; between cultivators of cereals, date or rice; between Shi'i peasantry and Sunni; between the Shi'ah nearer to Najaf and Karbelā' and those remote from them. Socially speaking, one could also distinguish between areas in which the social relations were peasantry versus landholders and areas of which the relations were those peasant members of tribes versus Sheikhs.

Nonetheless such a 'reality' of diversities could not render the term fellāhīn or peasantry into a meaningless one. Without conceptual delineation of fellāhīn and their societies as a social structure, this work will turn into a 'ghost hunt'. Furthermore, the existence of peasantry as a realistic (and not purely semantic) concept can be justified by and claimed for both empirical and conceptual reasons. Certain common peasants' attributes could be pointed out in reference to the Iraqi fellāhīn: Teodor Shanin suggests that one could delimit peasant societies by establishing a general type with four basic facets:

1. The peasant family /or tribe/ farm as the basic unit of multi-dimensional social organization ...
2. Land husbandry as the main means of livelihood directly providing the major part of the consumption needs ...
3. Specific traditional culture related to the way of life of small communities ...
4. The under dog position - the domination of peasantry by outsiders ...'.³

Without any violation of reality, all of the above-mentioned conditions were in existence among the Iraqi peasantry during the period of our concern.

1. F. Fanon, op. cit., p.47

2. V.G. Kiernan, 'The Peasant Revolution', The Socialist Register, (London, 1970), pp.30-33.

3. T. Shanin, Peasants and Peasant Societies, op. cit., pp.14-5

Conceptually, a tendency to treat fellāhīn as a meaningless notion can be defeated on assumptions related to the essence of sociology. 'A sociological generalization does not imply a claim of homogeneity or an attempt at uniformity. Quite the contrary, a comparative study implies the existence of both similarities and differences, without which a generalization would, of course, be pointless'.¹

What are the motives behind peasantry involvement in 'militant' politics? In contrast to the wishful thinking of some romantic revolutionaries, it has been suggested that it is highly difficult for peasantry to engage in sustained rebellion. 'Peasants are especially handicapped in passing from passive recognition of wrongs to political participation as a means for setting them right'.² Involvement in a political activity on a national level is preconditioned, one assumes, by an awareness or conceptual outlook of a national character. A peasantry (of the pre-communication revolution era and of the concrete conditions of Iraq) by his very socio-economic structure, lacked such a vision. His world had been confined to the boundaries of his village, family and tribe.

The disengagement from political action by the peasantry was attributed to their individualistic and competitive economic and social structure.³

Furthermore 'tyranny of work weigh heavily upon peasants ... Momentary alternations of routine threaten their ability to take up the routine later'.⁴

Moreover, 'Peasants as a rule, have been kept at arm's length from the social sources of power. Their political subjection interlinks with cultural subordination ...'.⁵ Thus it was argued that 'The Middle-East peasant is poor and exploited, but hardly anyone in the area expects him to rebel ...'.⁶

Nonetheless, the fact remains that Iraqi fellāhīn had risen in an armed and sustained rebellion which was of a far-reaching effect. Hence it is fair

1. Ibid., p.13

2. E.R. Wolf, 'On Peasant Rebellions', International Social Sciences Journal Vol.21, 1969. Distributed as a paper by the Sociology Department, Durham University, p.1.

3. Ibid., pp.1-2

4. Ibid.

5. T. Shanin, op. cit., pp.14-5

6. M. Halpern, The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa, (Princeton, 1965), pp.87-8

to suggest that the above-mentioned factors must have been neutralized or negated by the presence of counter and more effective elements.

In the evaluation of peasantry rebellions an essential importance was attached to the existence of historical tradition of political violence among the peasants.¹ Such traditions explained and motivated the recurrence of peasantry risings.² It was also suggested that in colonial countries, the peasants who are 'kept outside the class system' are the 'first to discover that only violence pays'.³

The Iraqi peasants were very rich indeed in their traditions of political violence and perpetual mutinies.⁴ Lorimer drew attention to three important tribal upheavals which took place in the 18th century; the Banī lām (1763), the Khāz'il (1763) and the Muntafiq (1769).⁵ It is sufficient to mention that al Fir'on counted some 15 major peasants outbursts of political violence (in the Mid-Euphrates) during the past two centuries of Iraqi history.⁶

The motive forces behind this almost perpetual peasant unrest were basically taking two forms: tribal mutinies directed against the central government land, taxation or conscript policies; and inter-tribal clashes over land or water settlement. The second form of conflict was often encouraged by the Turkish Government. It was obviously of a local character and formed a major handicap to the growth of a national awareness.

However the first form of tribal unrest, by virtue of being directed against the Central Government, was bound to assume a 'primitive' national character. In its early stages, such an upheaval was often arrested within its local boundaries. But on certain occasions, such an unrest was to claim a wider tribal unity. For instance, the Muntafiq tribal rising (1909)

1. J.P. Harrison, The Communists and the Chinese Peasant Rebellion, (London, 1970), pp.265, 276.

2. Mao Tse-Tung, The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party, (Peking, 1958), p.78

3. F. Fanon, op. cit., p.48

4. The Zunj movement (869-883), the Carmathian movement (901-6).

5. Lorimer, op. cit., pp.1127-32

6. F.M. al Fir'on, op. cit., pp.26-35

embraced a confederation of tribes and was directed against the Sa'dun and the Turks alike. Such forms of tribal movements allowed the advent of a limited national awareness which by-passed the local boundaries of strife and sought alliance with political leaders in towns remote from the arena of the direct conflict. It will be remembered that in 1910 there emerged some political co-ordination between Ṭalib Pasha of Basrah and some tribal leaders in Muntafiq, Shāmiyah and Najaf. All of them discovered unity in their clash with the Sa'dun and the Turkish rule.

By the turn of the current century the form of tribal-governmental clashes were gaining dominance. The inter-tribal strife was fading away. This was due to the rise of certain socio-political changes of which the most important were the introduction of the tāpu system and the administrative measures of centralization.

In many parts of Iraq the inter-tribal squabbles over land and water faded into insignificance before the much more difficult contention between tribesmen and tāpu holders. Thus dispute for land possession was fought between the fellāhīn whose ancestors had cultivated the land for centuries, paying only revenue to government and 'avoiding payment when they dared' and 'some influential absentee landlords who could produce a book of title deeds, all in order, serially numbered, each for the same vast area ... with unrecognizable boundaries, and wholly unsupported by possession'.¹

It goes without saying that the absentee landlords were not only unsupported by the actual possession of the land but also lacked the means and methods except the government support - of putting their claims into effective practice. Therefore, it is somehow misleading to speak of peasant-landlord conflict. It is more accurate to refer to such a conflict as between the peasants and the government acting on behalf of the landlords. Without the government's assistance the tāpu sanad is nothing but ink on paper.

In addition to that the growing strength and the aggressive centralization of the Turks was accompanied by an increasing demand for taxation and conscript.

1. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of the Revenue Dept. 1919, p.24

It was logical that the tribes, in their resistance, were to discover that their 'struggle' should be directed against the Central Government and that only a unified stance, both locally and nationally, could withstand the rising governmental pressure. Such a conclusion was to mark the beginning of a national awareness and to pave the way for the actual participation of Iraqi fellāhīn in national politics.

To clarify the picture, a short historical examination is deemed necessary. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Iraq witnessed a series of fellāhīn outbursts of violence. However, such movements were of a purely peasant character in the sense of being confined to local peasant demands, aspects and motives. None of these movements had assumed any 'national' character or role. The same judgement could hardly pass the 1920 movement whose national aspects and contacts were visible. Such a change was part of a historical process of which the 1920 was but a fruit of a certain chain of developments. In the early years of the 20th century new political developments were to occur. Contacts between town politicians and tribal leaders were taking place and tribal politics were beginning to assume a role far beyond their local limits. In the background of such a turn lay certain socio-economic changes which were occurring in Iraq mainly in land ownership relations. Inter-tribal conflicts were fading away and gradually being replaced by a new form of social conflict which was, essentially, a governmental-tribal dispute. Land ownership did not rest solely on brute force, and governmental decisions were assuming more importance. The growth of profit economy (replacing subsistence economy), river and land communication and administrative measures at centralization were all elements affecting the reduction of the gap between town and countryside. The spread of nationalist ideas and the general increase in political interests which marked the C.U.P. era were all factors in enhancing such a development.

Such a process was to be reflected among the more aware elements of the tribal sheikhs who became conscious that their tribal grievances would better be handled in conjunction with the 'politics' of the towns. Hence, in order

to defend their basic agrarian demands, they started to seek allies amongst the towns' politicians. At the other end, the intelligent Sayid Tālib was to grasp that in order to protect and further his power, he needed to conclude certain alliances with tribal sheikhs. When in 1911 Tālib formed his political party, Hizb al Hurriā wa al Itilāf, he attempted to win over the support of some Iraqi and Arab personnel. Amongst others, Tālib wrote to Sheikh 'Abd Allah al-Fāliḥ al-Sa'dun¹ in Muntafiq, 'Atiya abu Kulal in Najaf, Sayid Hādī Zuwīn and Sayid 'Alwān al Yāsiri of Shāmiyah and Sheikh Muḥdir al Fir'aun of the Fetla tribe.² According to al Baṣīr, al Yāsiri and al Fir'aun became strong supporters of the nationalist ideas. 'But the form of their anti-government agitation assumed a style suitable to the social conditions in their area. They started to criticize the local officials and incite against taxes and duties'.³ Baṣīr's 'but' is indicative of the direction of his argument which could not envisage the profound interaction between adopting 'nationalism' and resenting taxation. Tālib's attempt and the significant, although limited, tribal response was to set up a pioneering example.

The historical process which started during the Turkish era was to intensify on a much larger scale during the British rule, more especially after 1918. That was due to the very policy adopted and enforced by the new Administration. The nationalists and the Shi'i activities contributed to the solidification of that process which was concluded by the emergence of the nationalist-Shi'i-tribal alliance.

For reasons of chronology this chapter will confine itself to the discussion of the Administration's financial policy in the tribal areas. The next chapter will try to examine the essential question of the Administration's attitude towards the land ownership and the tribal structure. A different part will elaborate on the consequences of such a policy and its unwitting provocation of the nationalist-Shi'i-tribal alliance.

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1. Fāliḥ disputed 'Ajimi al Sa'dun on the leadership of Muntafiq. The latter sided with the Turks in attempting to put an end to the growing influence of Tālib.
 2. S. Faīḍī, op. cit., p.98
 3. M. al Baṣīr, op. cit., p.42

In the first place it is relevant to draw attention to a certain fact; for military reasons, the British troops' advancement through Iraq was along the Tigris river. The Tigris tribes were not only exhausted in the heat of the great strife but also had no illusions as to the British military might. This cast some light on the submissiveness of the Tigris tribes in comparison to the unsubdued tribes of the Euphrates.¹ Furthermore, during 1914-1918, the Euphrates tribes were left alone to enjoy a considerable period of self-rule under which there existed no taxes, government or mellākiya revenue. The British attempt at reimposing the administration's authority was to be delayed until 1918. It was logical that such an attempt would have faced a strong resentment. It was argued that:

'There appear to be several causes for this rather pardonable state of mind /resentment of all forms of government/. First we have had the bad government of the Turks before us, the tyranny of the Saadun before them and lastly the fact that they, the tribes, have tasted the sweets of almost complete freedom from any sort of Government restraint ...'.²

In fact the Administration itself had encouraged tribal disorder by a policy which involved intolerable shifts from one extreme position to the other. During the war it was the British policy to keep the tribes quiescent. This was done 'by large doles, subsidies and no taxation'.³ It was only in 1918 that the Gharāf was occupied and for the greater part of that year 'the /A.P.O./ was compelled owing to the hostility of the tribes to keep within the walls of that town'.⁴ Following upon the Armistice, the tribes of the Gharāf 'after many years of freedom from all taxation paid up revenue in full and to the landlord his share of the crop'.⁵

However, this point was of a wider dimension. The Iraqi fellāhīn tradition of political violence was enhanced and justified by their life experience which

1. See also Supra, pp. 8, 14.

2. F.O.882/26. Arab Bulletin No.36, Sept. 18 1917. Abstract from the Admin. Report of the A.P.O. Suq al Shuyukh.

3. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq 1921, p.18

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

had portrayed to them that 'violence pays'. The perpetual resistance of the fellāhīn had eventually convinced the Turks to 'accept only nominal payments for the government share'.¹

Wilson's argument that his rates of taxation were similar to those of the Turks is a superficial and misleading hypothesis. It evades the fact that Turkish 'revenue demands were never collected in full'.² An official British report admitted that 'In Turkish times the severity of the revenue terms was neutralized by the impossibility of enforcement'.³ For instance the Sheikhs of Shāmiyah, under the Ottoman rule, 'were a law unto themselves and paid or did not pay revenue (in case of payment at a much lower figure than the demand) according' to their own wishes.⁴ Furthermore, it was argued that Turkish methods of revenue assessment 'allowed room for abuse and corruption both in the estimation of average yield ... as well as "by eye" ... so that the assessment was far below the theoretical share of the state'.⁵

Such conditions were to produce among the fellāhīn a mental situation of the following sort:

'The fact that no rice, date or wheat revenue has been paid for many years to the Turks has had its effect, especially on the younger generation of tribesmen, who are in consequence arrogant, conceited and boastful. Their arguments are crude but logical, and are something as follows:

Firstly, 'No Government' means that we retain crops or money which could otherwise be taken from us in the form of revenue. Secondly, we retain lands from which we have ejected the rightful owners, therefore we have to pay no "Mallakiyah" (rent) to anyone and have gained and possess good rice lands for nothing. Thirdly, we exist and are prepared to defend ourselves by right of our strong arm, always a popular form of existence among savages'.⁶

Nonetheless, it seems that the implications of such an outlook were not seriously considered by the majority of the British officials. The re-introduction of taxes in the Mid-Euphrates area was accounted by most officers

1. S. Haider, op. cit., p.613

2. Ibid.

3. C.O.696/1. Hillah Admin. Report, 1918, p.135

4. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of Shamiyah, 1919, p.1

5. S. Haider, op. cit., p.613

6. F.O.882/26. Arab Bulletin No.36, Sept. 18 1917. Abstracts from the Admin. Report of the A.P.O. Suq el Shuyukh

as a moral victory and an administrative achievement. The eventual consequences of such taxation were overlooked, or at least underestimated.

In 1919, the Assistant Political Officer of Qal'at Sirkar proudly wrote:

'This year was the first for 16 years in which any revenue has been taken from the district. It is interesting to note that the Turks seeing how futile were their efforts to get revenue, 8 years before the war /1914/ organised the system of taking a half from the merchants exporting grain through Kut, Qurnah, etc.'¹

The 1919 Annual Report of the Assistant Political Officer of Suq al Shuyukh was more revealing and informative:

'... the disturbed state generally of the Muntafiq tribes (more especially those round Suq), and the fact that they had never paid revenue to the Turks for the previous 15 to 20 years, made its re-introduction a very delicate matter indeed. In 1916 and 1917 the G.O.C. Euphrates front, Gen. Sir George Brooking, issued orders that no revenue whatsoever was to be taken on cereals. This was a wise move, as probably any attempts at its collection would have resulted in armed resistance and possibly open rebellion ...'²

It is thus surprising that with such an understanding of historical circumstances that the report went on to show that:

'... During 1918 there has been a thorough count of all Suq date trees ... Shitwi or wheat and Barley Revenue for 1918 was taken at one-tenth rate. This again will be increased during 1919, and so Revenue from this source will be doubled probably trebled, during the coming year'³

In common with the Muntafiq Division (comprising Nāṣiriyaḥ, Suq, Shaṭrah and Qal'at Sikar), other tribal areas, namely those which comprised the Mid-Euphrates (Ḥillah, Dīwāniyah, Rumaithah, Samāwah, 'Afaḥ, Dagḥarah, Shāmiyah, Abu Sukḥair, Hindiyaḥ, Rustāmiyah, Kifl, and Kufah), all shared some mutual characteristics which will be discussed in due course. However, and in as far as taxation was concerned, it is noteworthy that the bulk of the settled tribes of this area were tax-evasive. They had resisted all Turkish attempts at tax collection, and were allowed to continue so at the early stage of British occupation. However, it was during late 1918 and early 1919 that these areas were to be 'subdued', at least temporarily, by the British: taxes were introduced and collection was taking place.

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1. C.O.696/2. Muntafiq Division Annual Report for 1919, Qal'at Sikar, p.47
 2. S.O.696/1. Admin Reports. 1918, Suq al Shuyukh, p.382. Italics mine.
 3. Ibid. Italics mine.

In 1918, the Political Officer of Hillah gave the following account of the conditions of Dīwāniyah:

'Especially in the case in Diwaniyah, the tribes of which were a constant thorn in the side of the Turkish Government. Paying little or no revenue, they more than once caused Turkish forces despatched for its collection to beat a hasty retreat.

The change which Capt. Daly has brought in the nine months during which he has been in charge of other districts may be judged by the fact that 10,000 tons of revenue grain has been paid in. While the tribes have themselves been persuaded to destroy the great majority of their towers'.¹

Prior to February 1919, Dīwāniyah district was included in Hillah division. Rumaithah and Samawah formed a separate administrative unit known as Samawah division. During the early stages of the occupation of the Mid Euphrates, the Administration considered it 'expedient' to grant subsidies to various tribes. 'Practically every Sheikh in Samawah Division [Samawah and Rumaithah districts] was in receipt of a monthly allowance'.² Thus when Dīwāniyah, in 1918, had paid a 'considerable revenue', the situation assumed a certain contrast with the adjoining district (Rumaithah) paying practically nothing although the agricultural conditions of the two districts were identical. To alter this situation the Civil Commissioner decided to exclude Dīwāniyah district from Hillah division. In February 1918 a new division was established which included the districts of Dīwāniyah, 'Afj, Samawah and Rumaithah. It was named the Dīwāniyah division. Daly, who was promoted to the rank of Major, whose successful efforts in Dīwaniyah district were appreciated, and whose 'harshness' was overlooked, was appointed as Political Officer of the new division.

Upon his appointment, Major Daly decided to subdue the Bani Hujaim federation who had hitherto 'paid little or no Revenue and whose conduct had left much to be desired'.³ This, according to Major Daly, was aimed at bringing the Hujaim 'into line' with the Dīwāniyah and 'Afaj tribes who, due to his efforts, 'had, in 1918 and early 1919, behaved in an exemplary manner ...

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1. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of Diwaniyah Division for 1919, p.1. Italics mine
 2. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of Diwaniyah Division for 1919, p.1
 3. Ibid.

paid a heavy Revenue for the first time in modern history, demolished their posts and voluntarily handed in their arms'.¹

Thus, the Samāwah and Rumaithah Sheikhs were summoned to Dīwāniyah to meet their new Political Officer and the Dīwāniyah and 'Afj Sheikhs 'whose example, it was hoped, they would follow'. This did not happen, instead they (the Sheikhs of Rumaithah and Samāwah) attributed the obedience displayed by the latter to fear of consequences and took upon themselves to condemn the Dīwāniyah and 'Afaj tribes as 'cowards'.² On their return journey to Rumaithah, they took oaths at the Shrine of Ḥamzah to the effect that they will resist all attempts of the Administration.

Major Daly gave the following account of the delicate situation he was facing:

'We were then confronted with a difficult problem. We could, on the one hand, leave Rumaithah alone on the grounds that it was better not to precipitate embarrassment, or we must accept the challenge of authority. The former course would have had serious results. The whole of the remaining tribes were watching events, and would have resumed their former lawlessness had they seen Rumaithah defying Government with impunity .. A small force was despatched to protect Rumaithah from the tribes, and air raids were carried out for some days ... Results were satisfactory, and the demolition of forts and surrender of arms were embodied in the terms of peace offered and accepted. The tribes of Rumaithah have since behaved remarkably well and are themselves conscious of the advantages and amenity of peaceful cultivation'.³

It is astonishing that the Administration had lulled itself into a false sense of security. The Administration was convinced that 'the tribes were contented with the British rule and have a pleasing readiness to obey orders'.⁴ And that even 'in case of any rising', wrote the Political Officer of Samāwah, Shīnāfiyah and Rumaithah, 'I think it would be easily quelled'.⁵ In January 1920, Major Daly of Dīwāniyah informed the Civil Commissioner that the tribes of his Division 'were most emphatic that the present form of Government'

1. Ibid. Italics mine.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. C.O. 696/1. Reports of Admin. for 1918, Samawah, p.55

5. Ibid.

should continue'.¹

Such an opinion was apparently the dominant one amongst British Officials in Iraq. During the first week in December 1917, the Civil Commissioner visited Hillah, Tuwairij, Kufah, Najaf and Karbalā'. He formulated the opinion that there is no likelihood of any serious rising on the part of the Euphrates tribes, nine-tenths of whom appreciate what is being done by the Administration.

In February 1918, Wilson raised the extraordinary argument that 'all leading Iraqi men have been greatly disturbed by recent announcement ... suggesting that the future of this country ... will be decided at the peace conference, or will be settled with due respect for the wishes of the inhabitants'.³

Such an exaggerated 'optimism' as to the pro-British tendencies of the Iraqi tribes must have been generated by confusing the genuine and actual tendencies with pronouncements motivated by dissimulation.

Less than a month after Wilson's remark it was officially reported in early March 1918, that Bani Ard, the powerful tribe on the river bank of the Hillah branch of the Euphrates (between Samawah and Rumāithah) had adopted a 'threatening attitude'.⁴ A month later it was reported

that the same tribe was preparing to form a league, 'the object of which was to prevent the assessment of their lands for revenue to be gathered on the crops which are about to be reaped'.⁵ In late May 1918, 'British Officers were

1. F.O.371/5226/E.5723. Baghdad despatch January 9th 1920, enclosing copy of letter dated Jan. 6th 1920. From P.O. Diwaniyah reported on the views of the notables in his district. Major Daly also argued 'Mid Euphrates area is the most prosperous in Iraq and provides most of the Revenue of the country and is entitled to a voice in its destinies - at present their voice is weak, and cannot compare with the clamour of amateur politicians of Baghdad and disappointed Sunni ex-Turkish officials but ten years hence they will have a very big "say".' One assumes that Major Daly was rather disappointed when the 'say' of the Mid-Euphrates tribes was declared within less than ten months.

2. F.O.371/3397/81648. Fortnightly Reports by P.O.'s (Mesopotamia); No.3. Report ending 15th December 1917.

3. F.O.371/3397/87149. Fortnightly Reports No.7. Report for the period between 1st to 15th February 1918.

4. F.O.371/3397/165202. Fortnightly Report, No.9, dated 1st to 15th March, 1918, Section A. Paragraph 6.

5. Ibid. Fortnightly Reports, No.9, for the period 15th April to 1st May, 1918. Section A., Para. 2.

pelted with mud in the streets of Rumaithah¹ and albu Jarib 'refused to permit assessment of their crops for revenue'. On 31st May 1918, some villages in Rumaithah district were bombed by the R.A.F.²

In May 1919, Rumaithah tribes again defied the Administration and 'air raids were carried out for some days'³ against the villages of those tribes.

'Results', according to the British Administration, 'were satisfactory and the demolition of forts and surrender of arms ... were accepted'.⁴ The Political Officer of Hillah reported in 1919 the outbreak of certain activities in Hillah and Musaiyb by 'the anti-British party in Iraq'.⁵ British armed boats arrived from Baghdad and patrolled the river between 'the Barrage and Imam Hamzah', and 'indulged in gun practice in the lands of the suspected tribes'.⁶ In the same year, Major Daly reported that a 'Sharifian' propaganda had blown through Diwaniyah.⁷

The annual Report of the Revenue Department for the year 1919 stated that there were difficulties over revenue collection 'in parts of Ba'qubah, Nasiriyah and the Afaj District of Diwaniyah. In the Rumaithah District there was even some attempt at organized resistance, which however collapsed ...'.⁸

The evidence resentment of the taxation system shown by the Iraqi fellāhīn should not be conceived as a mere product of spoiled anarchic tendencies. The grievances of the fellāhīn were genuine, justified and deep-rooted. It has been suggested that 'nowhere in any part of the world was agricultural production taxed so heavily as it was in the Irrigation Zone [of Iraq] during this period [1890-1937]'.⁹ One could add to this justified argument that at no time did the Iraqi fellāhīn of the Mid-Euphrates have to pay so much

1. Ibid., Fortnightly Reports, No.14, for the period 15th May to 1st June 1918, Sect. A. Para 5.

2. Ibid.

3. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of Diwaniyah Division for 1919, p.1

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., Admin. Report of Hillah Division for 1919, p.27

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., Admin. Monthly Report of Diwaniyah Division for August 1919, p.25

8. Ibid., Admin. Report of the Revenue Department for the year 1919, p.6.

9. S. Haider, op. cit., pp.615-6

in taxes as they did during the period between 1918 to 1921, as it is shown in the following table:

TABLE <u>The annual land revenue levied in Iraq.</u>					
	£		£		£
1888-90	311,929 ¹	1918-19	1,461,725 ³	1922-23	816,300 ⁵
1910-11	527,175 ²	1920-21	1,867,929 ⁴	1924-29	946,350 ⁶

This table reveals that land revenue was trebled within a period of ten years. After the implications of the rising were comprehended the revenue was drastically reduced (some 100 per cent) within only two years.

In 1920 Muntafiq, Dīwāniyah and Shāmiyah together paid £414,982.⁷ However the expenditure on the same area did not exceed £143,708.⁸ In 1919, Muntafiq paid a revenue of £124,636,⁹ In 1926, it had to pay only £75,201.¹⁰

The high increase of taxation on agricultural production had, unlike that on trade, no justification on grounds of agricultural improvement. In fact the agrarian situation had deteriorated to an alarming extent. The War conditions had caused the decrease of cereal production in 1918 to one-fourth of what it was in 1913.¹¹ Such production did not regain its pre-War standards until the mid-twenties.¹² At the end of 1917, an official British Report summed up the agricultural situation as follows:

'In Khaniqin the population is famine stricken; and there is no cultivation ... the Samara district is suffering from lack of food

1. S. Haider, op. cit., p.702.
2. S. Ḥimādeh, Al Niḍām al Iqtisādi fi al 'Irāq, (Beirut, 1938), p.461.
3. Cmd. 1061, op. cit., p.118. Figure was given in Rs.217,47,430, including land and Kodah revenue. The kodah of 1918-19 amounted to Rs.22,57,755. C.O.696/2. Kodah Revenue Annual Report, 1919, p.2. The remaining was calculated into £ by the writer.
4. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.224
5. E. Dowson, op. cit., p.16. Figure originally given in Rupees.
6. Ibid., Annual average.
7. C.O.696/3. Budget Estimates 1920-1921. P.iv. Figure in Rupees
8. Ibid., p.v
9. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report Muntafiq 1921, p.31
10. Report on the Operations of the Revenue Dept., Ministry of Finance, 1926-1927, (Baghdad, 1927), p.23
11. M.S. Hassan, al 'Amil al Iqtisādi ..., op. cit., p.14.
12. Ibid.

and fodder. In the neighbourhood of Baghdad ... there has not been sufficient seed to risk a catch crop in the rainland ... On the Euphrates, permission to send seed to Fallujah and Ramadi was received only at the very end of November; and full development of the area has, for military reasons been impossible'.¹

In late 1917 the Civil Commissioner of Iraq warned that 'Famine was threatening the civil population'.² Wilson described the agricultural conditions as follows:

'... the crops on the Hindiya branch of the Euphrates ... were entirely deprived of water, and in the Hindiya district there was no crop whatever. Along the Hilla branch of the river ... the yield of the matured crop had been very light. The town of Karbala and the surrounding lands had been flooded ... the rice crop sown in the Shamiya district ... had largely failed. Some pumps existed in the Diwaniya district, but they were out of action owing to lack of oil, and the canals had long since silted up ...

On the Tigris from Samarra to the vicinity of Baghdad all cultivation had been destroyed by military operations ... Near Baghdad rain failed ... In the Baquba area many acres of grain were destroyed by military operations ...

The canals had everywhere deteriorated. Thus, in the rich Hilla area at the time of our occupation there were 54 canals, all in very bad condition'.³

Wilson also pointed out that during 1918 'Even the date-groves (and fruit can be grown in Mesopotamia only under date-trees) had suffered from the scarcity of labour ... the trees had been left uncleaned and the ground untilled, for three or four years, and insect pests had multiplied accordingly'.⁴ In fact it was as late as the end of 1919 that the Political Officer of Shāmiyah was to report that:

'... the vast bulk of the population had stood for many months under a cloud of disappointment due to the devastation of their winter crops, through the act of God and the error of man's ways combined.

Floods, hail, locusts and the failure of irrigation schemes each in turn added its quota till the burden of loss and disappointment reached a point which under any but British Administration, must have led to grave unrest'.⁵

All of these burdensome difficulties were worsened by the drastic increase in the prices of materials essential to Iraqi fellāhīn. Between 1913 and 1918

1. F.O.371/3406. Admin. Report, Department of Revenue, Baghdad, 1918, p.31.

2. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.56

3. Ibid., pp.55-6.

4. Ibid., pp. 80-1.

5. C.O.696/2. Admin Report of Shamiyah for 1919, pp.1-2.

the price of rice increased 150 per cent, the cost of tea had trebled and that of sugar had increased five times.¹

Such conditions were not the direct fault of the British as much as the expected outcome of circumstances created by conditions of war. Nonetheless, the British Administration, in setting up its taxation policy, had apparently failed to take into account the financial hardships facing the fellāhīn. After all, the yearly increase of agricultural revenue was always linked to, and explained by, the efficiency of the Officers on the spot rather than to any hypothetical increase in agricultural production.

It was rather too late when the Civil Commissioner was to recognise the perils involved in the situation generated by the Administration's financial policy. Only one day before the outbreak of the rising, Wilson informed the India Office of the 'necessity for adequate land settlement and wise regulation of taxation'.² He pointed out that the situation in Nāṣiriyah was 'unsatisfactory', owing to 'the fact that districts watered by Hai are wholly inaccessible to troops'. However, Wilson did not omit to point out the opinion that 'for a permanent solution we must look ... not to political changes for which there is no demand ... but to adequate land settlement to carry through which Administration has not got at present necessary skilled staff, and to wise regulation of taxation'.³

Upon the arrival of Wilson's telegram, Major Young was to minute the following remark:

'I do not agree with Colonel Wilson that political changes will not provide the remedy. Colonel Gordon Walker, of Basrah, tells me that our repressive taxation, with no corresponding benefits given, is exceedingly unpopular with the Arab tribes, from whom the Turks never succeeded in extracting revenue ... the situation is really becoming dangerous ... It needs pacification ... Wilson can only imagine brigades and batteries (which are not the proper remedies)'.⁴

The importance of Young's argument did not lie in his opposition to Wilson's notions alone. Young was in fact advocating a new and a different policy to

1. M.S. Ḥassan, al 'Āmil al Iqtisādi ..., op. cit., p.15.

2. F.O.371/5227/B.7725. dated 28th June 1920, No.7825.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

be carried out in Iraq. It was a political indication of the future. A policy whose main pillars were the establishment of an Arab Administration and the drastic reduction of taxation. The conflict was neither personal nor trivial. It was a clash between two different outlooks and methods, between an outdated and unrealistic 'colonial' vision and an up to date and practical 'imperial' outlook.

In an attempt to dismiss the 'economic' factor behind the outbreak, Wilson argued that

'Outbreak began in two districts which in 1919 and previous years got off very lightly. With one partial exception it has since been confined to districts of which same is true. ... These areas in Turkish [times] were/ quite out of control and paid practically no revenue. They have never seen British armies and were never subdued. Their attitude where outbreak has occurred is not protest against our taxation but rather revolt against settled government of any kind inspired by malicious propaganda ...'.¹

The conditions and circumstances outlined by Wilson were accurate but his conclusion was mistaken. In contrast to his deduction, it was logical that areas which had previously evaded taxation and were unsubdued were to display the strongest resistance to the Administration's attempts. It has been suggested that peasantry located in peripheral areas outside the domains of landlords and government control are, culturally speaking, the main bearers of peasant tradition and form a conservative stratum. But seen from a political angle such a peasant stratum is the most instrumental in dynamiting the social order when it is attempted to be imposed on them.²

A few days after the rising, Wilson informed the India Office that the demands of the rebellion's leader (are complete expulsion of British from Mesopotamia and an Islamic kingdom'. This 'means the theocratic state which is their /Shi'ah/ ideal; to tribes it means no government at all, or government by chiefs who they can ignore at will; to a small minority of towns-people it connotes an Amir'.³

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1. F.O.371/5076. No.8284, dated 21st July 1920
 2. E.R. Wolf, 'The Peasantry as a Class', in T. Shanin (ed.), op. cit., pp. 269-70.
 3. F.O.371/5228/E.9849, dated 12th July 1920.

Wilson's assessment might have been very true. After all, the 'peasant Utopia is the free village, untrammelled by tax collectors, labour recruiters, large landowners, officials ... they also lack any acquaintance with the operation of the state as a complex machinery, experiencing it only as a "cold monster" ... for peasants the state is a negative quantity, an evil, to be replaced in short shrift by their own "home made" social order. That order, they believe, can run without the state'.¹

Wilson's other argument that 'Actual burden of land revenue falls ... on Shaikhs, Sirkals and Tapu holders. These three classes admittedly richer since British occupation',² was intended to dismiss the factor of 'improverishment' as a cause behind the rebellion. Once again, Wilson's account was right but his deduction mistaken.

A tendency to attribute political militancy to poor peasants who 'have nothing to lose' is a widespread notion which was originated by Marxist literature. However, such a view is not necessarily the sole representative of the social truth. It has been observed that the 'middle peasants' are initially the most militant element of the peasantry especially in generating the initial impetus of the 'peasant rebellion'.³ Such a notion was justified on the assumption that the middle peasant is relatively the most vulnerable to economic changes wrought by commercialism, while his social relations remain encased within the traditional design. Middle peasants are also the least able to withstand the depredation of tax collectors or landlords. Furthermore, middle peasants are also the most exposed to influences from the developing outside world.⁴

The rising of 1920 was led, among the fellāhīn, by the unpropertied sheikhs, the sirākīl and the 'free' peasant. The downfall of the large tribal confederation system allowed these groups to emerge as the rising tribal leadership

1. E. Wolf, 'On Peasant Rebellions', op. cit., p.10.

2. F.O.371/5076. No.8284, dated 21st July 1920.

3. H. Alavi, 'Peasants and Revolution', The Socialist Register, (London, 1965), pp.241-77.

4. E. Wolf, 'The Peasantry as a class', op. cit., pp.269-70.

capable of leading their fellow tribesmen. The Administration's taxation, land, and tribal policy intensified the process of integrating the fellāḥīn within the national socio-political system and was deeply resented by the bulk of them. The 'middle' peasants being in contact with the town politician and the Shi'i 'Ulemā' were to assist in giving the agrarian unrest a political character. A combination of all these factors was finally to dynamite the intended Wilsonian social order.

The Government rents of land revenue were as follows:¹

Table

District	Type of Land			
	Tāpu	Mīri	Saniyah	
	Government Share	Mellākiyah (per cent)		
Baghdad	20	33 $\frac{1}{3}$	36	
Diyala	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	25	36	
Hillah	20	60-44	36	
Dulīam	13 $\frac{1}{3}$	-	36	
Karbala'	20	24 $\frac{1}{3}$	36	
Dīwāniyah	20	40	38 $\frac{2}{3}$	
Kut	20	20	25	
Muntafiq	20	40	40	
Basrah	20	20	40	

This table discloses some relevant details; it shows that Hillah, Diwāniyah and Muntafiq were the regions most hit by the rates on the Mīri land. Of the three types of land the tāpu was the most heavily taxed in the case of a governmental support to the absentee landholder. This will form part of the next chapter.

1. Figures reproduced from Admin. Report of the Revenue Dept., Baghdad, 1918. Lt. Colonel E.B. Howell in C.O.696/1.

CHAPTER XI

THE BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE LAND PROBLEM AND THE TRIBAL SYSTEM

I. Conditions of Land Ownership prior to the British Occupation

When the Ottomans were expelled from Iraq, they left behind the difficult and unresolved problem of land ownership. The origins and nature of this question were dealt with in the first chapter of this work. It was suggested that British methods of tackling this issue would play an important role in deciding the future events and the socio-economic structure of Iraq.¹ In this part of the work, the task is an attempt to explore the developments of this problem, the British attitude towards it and the political consequences generated by it.

There is a 'common impression' that Midhat's land policy had produced two effects: the disintegration of tribal bonds and the establishment of 'feudal' and absentee-ownership of land. These two effects are, in fact, two sides of the one coin. The underlying force behind tribalism is the common property of the land or dira. If this form of property had truly vanished, then the tribal structure would have subsequently disintegrated. However, this 'impression' is one-sided, oversimplified and unrepresentative of all the details of a complicated, perhaps even contradictory, process.

Midhat's land policy, which in fact was an attempt to apply in Iraq the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, lasted for a period of less than twelve years. The mere brevity of such a period, coupled with other factors, was insufficient to perform such a radical coup d'etat in the socio-economic structure of Iraq. In 1880 and 1882, Midhat's tāpu system was suspended by two irāda (decrees).²

The Ottomans, subsequent to Midhat, considered that the allocation of land to the tribes, and particularly to sheikhs, would deprive them (the Turks) of a position through which they could control the tribes. Proceeding from such an assumption, the Turks lost no opportunity to use the principle of state

1. Supra, p.27.

2. E. Dowson, op. cit., p.21; M.S. Hassan, op. cit., p.190.

landownership by appointing as lessees those 'loyal' and 'untiring' sheikhs.

On the other hand the Turks withheld such a privilege from any tribe or sheikh who had shown signs of disobedience or independent tendencies.¹

It is interesting to observe that the decrees, suspending the tāpu system, were directed at the southern rather than the northern part of Iraq.² This 'discriminating' policy might have been motivated by two other factors: economic and sectarian. The economic element found its root in the fact that, unlike other parts of the Ottoman Empire, the Iraqi land of the irrigation zone (south) was nominally paying a much higher rate than the 'ushur (one-tenth) that was due on tāpu land.³ Thus the alienation of the land in accordance with the tāpu system would have involved the abdication by the state of its additional share of the produce over and above the 'ushur; while payment in lieu of tāpu value and in registration fees proved disappointing.⁴

In addition, Ottoman sultans took care to make fiefs (mīri land) only temporary, frequently redividing them, dispersing holdings, and allocating them in areas where the fief-holder was a stranger.⁵ This was obviously done to prevent haq qarrār from establishing itself on any mīri or state owned land.

It has also been suggested that Turkish reluctance to alienate land in the southern part of Iraq was motivated by sectarian prejudices. It is difficult to consider as a mere accident that the Kurdish Aghas of the north and the Arab beneficiaries of the tāpu in Mosul who had acquired large areas of land as mulk

1. S. Haider, op. cit., p.593.

2. M.S. Hassan, op. cit., p.190.

3. In the Ottoman Empire and on mulk and tāpu land only the land revenue (one-tenth) was demanded. On mīri land both land revenue and mellākiya (one-fifth) were demanded. (i) In Iraq it was applied in a different way: (a) Before Midhat: 10 per cent on crops irrigated by lift or by drains, 20 per cent on dates and fruits, 30 per cent on wheat and barley and 50 per cent on rice in land irrigated by canal. (ii) (b) Midhat reforms: land irrigated by drains and life was still to be subject to 10 per cent of the gross produce. Land irrigated by flow and alienated in the tāpu was to be subject to a flat rate of 20 per cent.

(i) S. Haider, op. cit., pp.597-8.

(ii) Ibid., p.308.

(iii) Ibid., p.599.

4. Ibid., p.594.

5. A.N. Poliak, Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and the Lebanon 1250-1900, The Royal Asiatic Society, (London, 1939), pp.18, 23-5, 61, 78.

were both Sunni. The only sheikhs, in the Mid-Euphrates, who obtained extensive proportions of land were the Sa'dun family, themselves Sunnis. The tribes and sheikhs of the south who, everwhelmingly, were of the Shi'i faith went empty handed out of the tāpu system.

Nonetheless, one ought to point to the fact that the Shi'i tribes bear a great deal of responsibility. They declined to grasp the opportunity when it was offered, due to their fear of taxation, conscription and in accordance with their tradition of land acquisition by force rather than by 'paper'.

Therefore it would not be a great deviation from the truth to argue that in Iraq, most of the 'feudal lords' acquired absolute ownership of their land in the 1930s and 1940s. 'Because in Ottoman times the cultivators /on tribal lands/ had no legal title to the land which they occupied, the landlords were able, during the period of mandate, to use their political power /and British sympathy/¹ to secure legal title to land which was by custom and tradition the property of the tribe'.² Dr. Warriner went on to suggest that:

'... the process is being hastened by mechanization, which gives the big landowners an advantage as against the small cultivator and by inflation, which gives them the impetus to invest'.³

Thus, during the period of direct British rule over Iraq (1914-1921), the British Administration was facing several forms of land conditions and land property. Before giving an abstract and a generalized description of these forms, it is wise to confess that the writer finds himself in no better position than the able expert, Sir Ernest Dowson, who wrote:

'These conditions /of land tenure/ vary so much not only from province to province, but from locality to locality and from community to community, that no picture of them can be presented which combines fidelity of detail with a comprehensive view'.⁴

Yet it is impossible to examine the situation and its impact without at least some general outline of the conditions which prevailed.

Variations of Land tenure which were generated by the introduction of the

1. Added by the writer.

2. D. Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, (London, 1948), p.107.

3. Ibid.

4. E. Dowson, op. cit., pp.11-12.

tāpu system could be seen from different angles. However, in this field of study the socio-political aspects of the issue are more interesting. In this respect one could point to three forms of land social ownership which were in evidence before and during the period of direct British rule. One ought also to examine the different impacts of the different forms of land property on the tribal system of each area.

In some areas the tāpu system was not applied and thus the land had preserved its mīri character. It goes without saying that in such regions the tribal system was hardly touched and had, virtually, preserved its previous strength. Such was the case in some parts of the Mid-Euphrates.

In other areas the tāpu system was much in evidence and therefore the system of land ownership had undergone certain changes. However, in such locations it is necessary to differentiate between at least three distinct forms of land alienation. In some provinces the land was allocated to the sheikhs or aghas who were the heads of the actual cultivators of that land. In such territories,¹ the tribal system was hit at the core of its heart. By transferring the sheikhs into landholders, the roots of animosity were cultivated between the sheikhs and their fellow tribesmen. The tribe as a social unit was to disintegrate and a detribalization process was taking place. Furthermore, the fellāhīn, in these circumstances, were left deprived of any recognized leadership to organize or lead their 'struggle'.

In other districts, as in Muntafiq, the land was assigned to the paramount sheikhs of the large tribal confederations. This guaranteed the breakdown of the confederation system and the loss by al Sa'dun of their previous popularity. However, the small tribal units were to re-emerge and the previously 'small' sheikhs of the confederated tribes were to lead their tribesmen's struggle against the paramount sheikhs who preferred the temptation of becoming landholders. Thus, in such conditions, the tribal confederations were to undergo a breakdown process, whereas the smaller tribal units were to emerge on much stronger foundations.

1. Such conditions prevailed mostly in the Kurdish areas and Mosul.

Briefly, 'what the Sa'dun in the past acquired as their hereditary dues, they exchanged, under the Turks, for right. According to law and since the day they called in the government to support them against the tribes, they lost their sympathy; and it was not long before the tribes threw off their yoke, thus reproducing the present struggle in the tribal system, where the minor leaders have thrown off the authority of the paramount shaikh and the latter is calling upon government to support him'.¹

The Sa'dun were once the undisputed leaders and paramount sheikhs of the Muntafiq federation. Upon their accepting to become landholders, they, in fact, had invited their own degradation. 'The result of this course was to make the tribesmen the tenant of the Sa'dun, instead of his followers; this definitely turned him against them with the result that, after much disorder the tribes finally revolted against the Sa'dun, and to this day /1920/ do not accept them either as landlords or sheikh'.²

In other provinces, the actual cultivators were completely ignored. The land was portioned out to some merchants and town notables. However this was only theoretical and in accordance with the tāpu system. In practice the actual cultivators (the tribesmen) remained masters of their land, while the new landholders were absentees wholly dependent on the government.

In regions of this description, the tribal system was to grow stronger than ever. Conditions of that sort exposed to the fellāhin that it was only by means of their collective strength as members of a tribe that they were able to defend themselves against government officials and tāpu holders alike. In consequence the tribesmen grew more than ever conscious of their tribe as a unit and of their land as a tribal dīra held and protected collectively by the whole tribe. Hence it was in such areas that the tribal system, in both its socio-political and militant sense, had assumed its most powerful momentum. Such was the case with most of the Mid-Euphrates provinces.

In general terms, the writer could give the following relevant details

1. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq Division, 1920, p.60.

2. Ibid. p.61.

concerning the 'forms' of land prevailing in Iraq during 1914-1921: the lands of Ramādi area were all mīri with the exception of 'Azīziyah canal, which was saniyah. In Fallujah nearly the whole area was tāpu.¹ In Musaiyib, a large portion of the land was saniyah; in Karbalā' it was almost entirely tāpu, in Hindiyyah and Dīwāniyyah, mīri predominated; In Hillah it was tāpu.² Nearly all the land throughout the Sāmarrā' district was mīri, and tāpu was conspicuous by its absence.³ In Ba'qubah district, the greater part was tāpu, yet there existed a large portion of land which was waqf and two large estates⁴ which were saniyah and mīri.⁵ In Muntafiq division, including Nāṣiriyyah, Shaṭrah, Suq al Shuyukh and Qal'at Sikar, tāpu land predominated.⁶ And so was the case of Qurnah⁷ and 'Amarāh.⁸

However, what is essential to this work is to examine the social conflict which was introduced by the tāpu system of land ownership and its political consequences. Such an examination will render priority to the socio-political character of the conflict without getting involved in the legal aspects of the problem. The second step will be an attempt to study the attitude taken by the British Administration towards the conflict and the political impacts of such an attitude.

Such a proposed outline involves the exclusion of other forms of land property apart from the one subjected to tāpu claims. It is a deliberate evasion; Mawāt, Mushā'ah and Waqf lands represented no political problems, and such was the case with the Mulk land which, anyhow, was rare in its existence.

Saniyah and Mīri land formed a different representation. Mellākiyah rents were not demanded on such forms of land. Furthermore, there existed no dispute

1. C.O.696/1. Baghdad Wilyat Administration Report for the year 1917, p.89.

2. Ibid. Admin. Reports 1918, Hillah Division, p.121

3. Ibid., 1918, Samarra District, p.5.

4. Namely, rail of the Mahrute and the 'Uthmāniyyah.

5. C.O.696/1. Admin Reports for 1918, Baqubah District, p.15.

6. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports Muntafiq Division, 1919, pp.1-2.

7. F.O.371/3049/178231. Memo; 'Administration Report for Qurnah and district', Signed, J.B. Mackie, A.P.O., dated 23rd July 1917.

8. C.O.696/3. Admin. Reports Amarah Division 1920, pp.25-6.

over the ownership of those lands, both of which were duly recognized to be owned by the government. The essential conflict over miri land was centred on taxation; an issue already dealt with.

It was pointed out that the Iraqi tribesmen 'looked upon the payment of taxes as a necessary evil and will pay up the Khumus /the one-fifth/ without demur. It is the payment of Mallakiyah around which centres all the trouble ...'.¹ A similar notion was formulated by yet another official British report. It was affirmed that a tribesman did not base his case on tribal ownership, but on the grounds that the land is the property of the Government on which for generations, the tribesmen have been settled, acting as agents of Government and that the tāpu holders 'by a trick filched away the tribal rights'.²

Furthermore, it seems that the Saniyah land had the advantage of an efficient administration coupled with terms of loans and rent acceptable to the cultivators. It was reported by the British Administration that these Saniyah lands (private estates of the Crown) were under very active management. They occupied no 'insignificant proportion of the earth's surface in Iraq, and comprised many of the most valuable properties'.³ They were often acquired in dubious ways, 'but once acquired they were well looked after'. The tenants were encouraged, by loans and other methods, to feel that the sovereign 'took a personal interest in their welfare, and, if he helped himself to the lion's share of the produce, he was also capable of showing a judicious liberality upon occasions, and was an enterprising and enlightened landlord'.⁴ The report went to the extent of suggesting that 'the personal popularity which Sultan Abdul Hamid enjoyed in Iraq and the veneration, which his name still generally commands, are largely due to the way in which his Sanniyah properties were managed'.⁵

However, in 1908 came the proclamation of the constitution and the end of the old regime. The status of the Saniyah lands was changed and their title

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1. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq Division, 1919, pp.31-2.
 2. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq Division, 1921, p.60.
 3. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of the Department of Revenue for the Year, 1919, p.31.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

was altered to Amlāk al Mudawarah (Converted Estates). This was the outward sign of nationalization. Thus the distinction between mīri and mudawarah had to a great extent disappeared before British occupation. Nevertheless, favourable conditions of agrarian loans and administrative assistance went on unchanged.¹ It is evident that the rents which the fellāhīn had to pay were amply justified by the services rendered to them by the Saniyah Administration.²

Thus one hopes that in confining the discussion of the social conflict over land ownership to the lands claimed by the ṭāpu system is a justified approach both in theory and in practice.

II. British Policy towards Land Problems

To start with, it is very clear that the dispute between the actual cultivators (fellāhīn) and the ṭāpu holders (absentee or not) was very acute indeed and at the core of the agrarian unrest in the irrigation zone of Iraq.³ In 1911, the Turkish Government was compelled to institute a Committee of Enquiry to investigate the causes of tribal disorders. The Commission was understood to attribute the 'troubles to the fact that the arable lands of the tribes are in the hands of a few powerful Shaikhs, who oppress their fellow tribesmen and keep them at variance and that the proper remedy is thoroughgoing partition of the lands'.⁴

During the period of British Occupation, an official report confirmed the above-mentioned information and added 'Today /1921/ the position is much the same. The agrarian problems are more acute and land settlement has been relegated to the dim future, in addition to which the tribes are faced with revenue demands which they can not meet'.⁵

1. Ibid.

2. S. Haider, op. cit., pp.584-5.

3. Suffice to mention that in Nāṣiriya district alone, the A.P.O. had to deal with 64 disputes regarding water, 102 disputes regarding land boundaries, 34 petitions requesting payment of Sarkālah, 70 petitions requesting payment of Mellākiyah and 42 applications for the attestation of ṭāpu Sanads. All of that was in only one year, 1919. C.O.696/2. Admin Reports, Muntafiq Division, Nāṣiriya District, 1919, p.39.

4. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of the Revenue Department for the year 1919, p.24, para. 88.

5. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports. Muntafiq Division, 1921, p.18, para. J.

To stress the importance and acuteness of the problem, it is sufficient to draw attention to the fact that it was during the 'earlier years' of British occupation that the Administration recognised that difficulties connected with the tenure and ownership of agricultural lands would prove one of its most formidable tasks, 'perhaps the most formidable of all'.¹ However it was unfortunate that such a realization was tempered by an inclination towards a postponed solution. 'But naturally, while the war was in progress, nothing could be done towards finding a solution of this difficulty', so argued a senior British official.²

However, the British officials on the spot protested against such a relaxed attitude and pointed out that the problem was so urgent and acute that it cannot afford to be 'shelved even during the war period'.³

Two principal aspects of the land problem were to confront the new administration and to demand satisfactory solutions. The first was the legal or the administrative side of the question. The second was the socio-political aspect which demanded decisions of a political nature and consequences. Neither of those two manifestations of the issue was clear-cut or easily resolved. Although the political side of the problem is of more relevance to this work, the legal aspect cannot be totally ignored.

(a) The Administrative Aspect of the Land Question: It seems that the Ottoman Administration, backward and corrupt as it had been, was incapable of accomplishing such an ambitious scheme as it had embarked upon on land partition. Thus the net outcome of such an attempt was an 'absurd', 'chaotic' and 'utterly confused' situation to be left to the British Administration.

The conditions of land tenure were different in every liwā according to the degree of effective control exercised by the Turks and to the habits and customs of the inhabitants:

1. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of the Revenue Dept. for the Year 1919, p.21, para.77

2. Ibid. It was also stated that upon the solution of this problem depended tribal peace and contentment. Ibid. p.25, para. 89.

3. Ibid., p.23, para. 85.

'No general rules could be laid down and it was not until 1919 that sufficient data were available to enable the Administration, through the revenue Commissioner to pronounce with any certainty on the respective right of Government, tribal chiefs, landlords, holders of the fiefs (uqr) and tenants in different districts'.¹

However pessimistic this argument might sound, the reality was worse. It is extremely doubtful that by 1919 'sufficient' data were available'. The previously mentioned Dowson Report (1931) and other official reports indicate the contrary.

For instance, Captain T.C. Orgill, the Assistant Political Officer of Nāṣiriyaḥ, embarked on a thorough examination of title deeds, issued by the Turkish tāpu Department of his district, and of the alleged rights of the Mellākīn. From this examination it appeared that 'no two cases were alike; every possible variety was discovered'.² Captain Orgill described these varieties:

1. Mallaks in possession of title-deeds, who have never actually been able to obtain any income at all from the tribes ...
2. Mallaks in possession of title deeds in which the boundaries as stated are obviously absurd. Some of the boundaries ... might be taken to include a large portion of Iraq.
3. Mallaks in possession of title-deeds, the areas as stated in which are infinitesimal, whereas the real area of the property runs into hundreds of acres.
4. Mallaks in possession of title-deeds in which no areas are stated at all.
5. Mallaks in possession of no title-deeds at all'.³

Furthermore it was reported that:

'In many cases deeds were acquired in the most irregular manner and not in accordance with the provisions of the tapu law: added to this, the wording of the title deeds is of the vaguest. Tracts measuring thousands of acres are shamelessly recorded as being two or three donums in extent, merely to avoid the payment of full registration fees to Government. The boundaries ... quite incapable of practical interpretation on the spot'.⁴

Complicated as it is, one would like to add to the picture the fact that some of the Mellākīn with the worst title-deeds actually received in years previous to British occupation fair payments from the tribes. On the other hand, many of those holders of title-deeds that approached nearest to legality had been unable to enforce even a fraction of their claims. Superimposed on this

1. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.78.

2. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq Division, Nāṣiriyaḥ District, 1919, p.37.

3. Ibid.

4. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report of the Muntafiq Division for 1919, p.2.

the historical fact that the exorbitant claims of some of the Mellākīn at a certain period had provoked a rebellion in the tribes, in the course of which the tribesmen hurled out those Mellākīn by force of arms. No doubt that Captain Orgill's conclusion in which he stated that 'this will give an idea of the tangled situation with which an already heavily worked District Officer is ordered to deal',¹ is a fair and logical conclusion.

Furthermore, it was clear what an utter farce the Ottoman tāpu system really was in Iraq. According to Article 1 of the Tāpu Law (of 7 Ramazan 1274=21st April 1858), 'No one in future for any reasons whatever shall be able to possess state land without having a title deed'.² Nevertheless, it was reported in 1919, 'even of the lands around Baghdad, for example, of which possession apart from boundary questions is generally undisputed, the greater part are held without sanads from the Tapu Department ... Even the Department of Auqaf never took out Tapu sanads for the vast properties which it claims'.³

The tāpu law of inheritance was not strictly in accordance with the Shar'a law. This is believed to have been the cause which prevented many persons who had long held cultivating possession of mīri lands, from applying for registration of their lands in the Tāpu Department. Another reason lay in the rascality which prevailed in Tāpu officers, and the high fees charged. Yet another reason was the low value, as security, of the deed even when obtained.⁴

(b) The Socio-Political Aspect of the Land Ownership: The socio-political aspect of the conflict was of a far more complicated nature. It was, virtually, an insoluble dispute with the two sides (the fellāh and the land holder) assuming irreconcilable positions. Furthermore the very conditions of the conflict were to impose on the government resolutions of a political character which subsequently could not escape political reactions.

1. Ibid., Nāsiriya District, p.37.

2. Ibid.

3. C.O.696/2. Administration Report of the Revenue Department for the year 1919, p.23.

4. Ibid.

The tāpu holder considered himself as the legal owner of the claimed land. For him, ownership was determined by the sanad which he had obtained by paying his fee. The government, Turkish or British, bore 'legal' responsibility towards him and was supposed to aid in his mellākiyah rent collection.

As for the fellāh, the question was conceived from a totally different angle. The tāpu sanad was an unrecognized innovation which did not stem from any of his conceptual outlooks, traditions or the fact of actual cultivation. Thus, he utterly denied any importance attached to a 'paper' and furiously resented any claimed rights generated by such a document.

A tribal non-propertied Sheikh explained to a British Administrator why he did not bother to acquire a sanad for his land, 'My sword is my boundary ... yes a sword is the thing and no nonsense about writing'.¹ Crude and wild as it sounds, such an argument, nonetheless, revealed a genuine and prevailing outlook based on years of tradition and practice. Moreover, an argument of this character finds its roots, perhaps even justifications, in the very conditions of peasant life itself.

It has been argued that 'Landlords are not needed to establish the fact of peasantry'.² Land property has been defined 'as a socially accepted exclusive right to hold and utilize concerned, right which is separate from rights acquired by the investment of labour and capital'.³ Furthermore there is a clear distinction between ways of holding land property defined by Shanin thus: 'on the one hand, the peasant family holding defined by custom, on the other hand, of politically formalized legal ownership'.⁴ It is obvious that the two forms are not necessarily identical. In the Iraqi conditions of 1914-1921, the two forms of land property were totally incompatible. In fact Shanin suggests that the landholders' actual appropriation of part of the peasants' produce and even their political and administrative domination has generally 'failed to break the basic features

1. T.S. Mann, An Administrator in the Making, (London, 1921), p.202.

2. R. Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture, (Chicago, 1956), p.23.

3. T. Shanin, op. cit., p.9. Italics mine.

4. Ibid., Italics mine.

of the peasant land relationship'.¹ However, it should be added that neither such an appropriation nor domination was in evidence at that stage of Iraqi history. Concerning the concrete conditions of the Middle East, Dr. Warriner argued that

'Ownership in no way affects the methods of cultivation; in a landowner's village, the peasants continue their /separate/ strip cultivation, even sometimes on the mushaa system, without in any way changing their methods or working under direction. Landownership is a credit operation, nothing more'.²

Investment of capital in the land by a landlord might have encouraged the acceptance of the peasants of the landlord's claimed 'legal or formalized' ownership. But it was suggested that in the Iraqi conditions of 1914-1921, the agrarian problem was accentuated because most landholders were absentees, living outside their claimed lands and 'demand 20 per cent of the crop and put nothing back into the land'.³ The fellāh's 'one fear is that he may be burdened for all time with a mere drone for a landlord who evinces more interest in his camels than in the tribes on the land'.⁴ Furthermore, it was officially reported that:

'... if he /the fellāh/ had to choose between the lesser of two evils, that is to say, the Sarkal or the Mallak, he would undoubtedly plump for the former, the reason being that the Sarkal keeps open house, organises labour, provides in case of necessity money to buy seed, usually by appealing to Government for a loan and acts as an intermediary between him and Government; whereas the absentee landlord disdains to interest himself in anything but his camels and mallakiyah'.⁵

The foregoing makes it difficult to deny that the Iraqi fellāh's resentment of the landholder's claims was fully justified in Iraqi conditions.

The introduction of the tāpu system in Iraq was not the fruit of an internal development of the Iraqi conditions. The corruption, inefficiency and misconduct which surrounded the implication of the system were to add further complications to the situation. It was this very fact which had produced the political aspect of the land problem. In short, the Law was an

1. Ibid.

2. D. Warriner, Land and Poverty ..., op. cit., p.23.

3. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report, Muntafiq, 1921, p.61.

4. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report, Muntafiq, 1919, p.2.

5. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report, Muntafiq, 1921, p.61.

imposed one and it was impossible to implement it without the force of the State itself. It was highly improbable for the mellāk and the fellāh to come to terms. It was equally improbable for the tāpu holder to earn his claimed mellākiyah without the effective assistance of the powerful State. Hence the Government was unable to avoid taking sides.

The situation developed into an active political and social polarization and exploded into the 1909 fellāhin uprising which covered the whole of the Muntafiq Division. The British Administration was confronted with the dispute from the early days of its establishment. The Administration was unable to enjoy a luxurious impartiality. It had to throw in its lot with one side or the other. In short, the main political issue, generated by the land problem, rendered itself into the question, whether or not the Administration was to recognize and enforce the 'rights' of the tāpu holders.

Captain Mackie, summed up the problem in the following way:

'Undoubtedly the largest revenue question we have to face is the question of the absentee landlord armed with his tapu sanad but unable to collect his mallakiyah unless we are willing to help him to do so ... at present /July 1917/ we have no policy on which to work. We can only tell them to wait. The need of a definite ruling however that we are to support either the man who has possession but no title deeds or the man who has the title deeds but not possession is most pressing and cannot be too strongly emphasised. The /fellāhs/ have in the majority of cases been cultivating the land and enjoying the full products of it for many years and are now claiming the land as theirs against the absentee landlords, and they in their turn look to us to support their cause against their opponents'.¹

In March 1918, the Political Officer at Nāsiriya confirmed the above-mentioned argument and pointed out that the Administration was confronted with two alternatives:

1. If we want peace and quiet in the country and early settlement of all our problems, we should support the Arab tribes irrespective of right of landlords ... /this/ would win every tribe over to our side definitely.
2. If we support the /landlords/ then we must support /them/ right away through, which will, I fear, effectually alienate the tribesmen. Result will possibly be perpetual trouble, large garrison, frequent punitive expeditions and much expenditure'.²

1. F.O.371/3049/178231. Memo 'Administration Report for Qurnah and District'. Signed Captain J.B. Mackie, A.P.O. Qurnah, dated 23rd July 1917.

2. F.O.371/3406/102207. Report by Captain H.R.P. Dickson, A.P.O. of Suq-ash. Shuyukh, dated 9th May 1917. Included in the Report of P.O. Nasiriya for the year ending 31st March 1918, p.39

However, Captain Dickson went on to point out that there were two other 'middle courses', each of which, he thought was worthy of consideration. The first was to allow the 'landlord to retain his claims only to his land, but forbid him from interfering with it at all'.¹ The second course was based on sound and logical legal and jurisprudential considerations; and that was to:

'Examine the tapu sanad of each landlord, if it has all four boundaries definitely established and if the number of donums agree with the acreage then let it stand and Government to enforce that landlord's rights in full. If donums do not agree with the acreage and boundary marks are not all fixed, then Government to step in and arbitrarily cut down the property until the landlord only possesses a strip of date palm along the river bank with say 300 yards depth of waste land behind. The balance land so taken away to be handed over to tribesmen and tapu papers issued to them'.²

Thus the British Administration was confronted with two choices; one would have paved 'the real road to peace', brought the allegiance of the powerful tribes to the Administration and eased the injustices inflicted upon the fellāhīn by the corrupted Ottoman Administration. The other alternative would have caused 'perpetual trouble, frequent punitive expeditions', 'alienated the tribes' and 'incurred a very great deal of odium in the eyes of the tribes'. A 'middle course' which was jurisprudential rather than political would have given the Administration a breathing space and allowed a thorough investigation of land claims. By all accounts, legal, political, economic and human, the British Administration was not supposed, one assumes, to side with the landlords. However, that was not the actual 'course' upon which the Administration embarked.

(c) The British Policy: To start with, the writer would like to confess that it was very difficult indeed to pinpoint the actual British policy towards the land problem. This was for reasons beyond the writer's responsibilities; it was officially admitted that:

'Although the records of Captain Levy who made preliminary investigations³ ... are complete in their reference as to who had a

1. Ibid., p.40

2. Ibid., p.41

3. By the end of 1919, a Land Commission, with Legislative powers and all the paraphernalia of chainsmen and surveyors was formed. More details on this Commission will be given later in the course of discussion.

'right to own land and who had not, the methods by which he proposed to translate his decisions into action are not on record, nor is there any record of a line of policy, if indeed one had been decided upon'.¹

However, it was essential to embark on the tiresome and complicated task of attempting to trace the line of policy which the British Administration had adopted.

During the war it was the Administration's policy to keep the tribes quiescent and this was done by 'large doles, subsidies and no taxation'.² Following upon the Armistice and the collapse of the Turkish Empire, a complete turn in the Administration's policy was to take place. For instance the tribes of the Gharāf alone had 'after many years of freedom from all taxation, paid up revenue in full and to the landlord also his share of the crop. In 1919, about 16 to 17 lackhs³ of revenue alone was collected'.⁴ It was not surprising that 'in 1920, the disturbances broke out and the situation again reverted to anarchy'.⁵

Thus it is clear that prior to the Armistice the Administration did not commit itself either way. This in effect was to the advantage of the 'unpropertied' tribesmen. Captain Orgill of Nāsiriya pointed out that on the British arrival, they found a 'class of Mallaks' whom he indicatively described as 'holders of pseudo-title deeds who claimed revenue'. However, during the first year or two 'no principle was enunciated'. In this way British Officers 'retained full freedom' in treating the question.⁶ On the 18th December 1917 a proclamation was published by the G.O.C. confirming and 'enabling district Officers to retain this freedom'.⁷ However, this line of policy did not last for long. That freedom was abandoned.

1. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports. Muntafiq Division, 1921, p.60

2. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report Muntafiq Division, 1921, p.18

3. 16 to 17 lacks of Rupees were equivalent to some £160,000 to £170,000.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report. Muntafiq Division - Nasiriyah 1919, p.37

7. Ibid.

At the close of 1918, and in reply to Memo No.249 of 10th December 1918, it was decided that on lands where the landlord and tenant could not come to terms, the division of the crop should be as follows:

'50 per cent	to go to the Fallah	
20	do	Government as revenue
20	do	Mallak as rent
10	do	Shaikh or Sarkal'. ¹

Thus the total share of the Government and the mellak amounted to 40 per cent of the total production. 'This was of course too heavy a burden for agricultural land to bear'.² The tribes protested against the excessiveness of the rates.

In July 1919, the Revenue Secretary, after consultations with the Political Officers on the spot, decided to reduce the total demand to 30 per cent.³

'District Officers were ordered to collect this 30 per cent and themselves to pay to the mallak the share of 15 per cent'.⁴

These decisions which were announced at a public meeting by the Revenue Secretary were as follows:

'(1) A normal demand of 40 per cent was too high ...

(2) The demand should, therefore, be reduced all round on lands where no private right of ownership is claimed, to 30 per cent.

(3) On privately owned lands:

(a) Where the so called owner had come to terms, the agreement between them whether attested by an /A.P.O./ or not, should be understood as made with his consent and enforced unless it was obviously grossly unfair either through undue influence exerted at the time of completion or by reason of subsequent calamity: Repudiation of contract should only be allowed in very rare cases, especially where the contract had been ratified by the /A.P.O./.

(b) Where the parties had been unable to come to terms, Government, being bound by the undertakings given should collect at 30 per cent and surrender to the owner whose position as owner they previously admitted, the half of the amount realised by them. In such cases the owner had no right to interfere in the management of the estate claimed by him.⁵

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1. Ibid., Muntafiq Division 1919, p.2.
 2. Ibid., Nassiriyah 1919, p.37
 3. Ibid., Muntafiq Division 1919, p.2.
 4. Ibid., Nassiriyah, 1919, p.37.
 5. Ibid., Muntafiq, 1919, p.25

Thus the British Administration, for reasons to be discussed later, had embarked on a policy which, in essence, was to back the landlords. A deduction of this sort is justified in the light of, at least, two elements.

First, the Government took upon itself the collection of the mellākiyah on behalf of the mellāk. Thus 'Revenues and Mallakiyah now /1919/ go hand in glove and figure nowadays very large in the tribesman's eye'.¹ Prior to that, a mellāk was never able to get 20 or 15 per cent rent and, more often than not, was willing to accept any sum, no matter how trifling. In some cases, if a sanad was drawn up between the sheikh or serkāl and the claimant, it was customary for the latter to grant a large rebate as serkālah, merely to get the sheikh or serkāl to recognize his claim.²

On the other hand it was officially reported that land holders 'who have not entered into agreement with their tenants for a fixed sum as rent, now /1919/ recover their rent from government and in most cases this has been resulted in their getting a far greater sum than they have ever yet been able to obtain ... many cases have come to light of landlords who have been unable to collect any rents whatever during the last ten or fifteen years but who will now realize a sum far above their wildest expectations'.³ Thus in both cases: (sanad or no sanad), the mellāk was enabled to collect a rent from 'cultivators who, were they not cowed by fear of British Government, would have resented such action by cutting the throat of Mallak and Mamur alike'.⁴ Furthermore, the intervention of the Administration was to make the sheikh or serkāl lose his serkālah.

The second measure of the British land policy in Iraq exposes a further and a clear bias towards landholding classes. It is unnecessary to re-describe the absurdity of land boundaries as entered in Turkish tāpu sanads. Nevertheless, it could have been that this very absurdity required thorough

1. C.O.696/3. Admin. Reports Muntafiq 1919, p.1.

2. Ibid., p.2.

3. Ibid., p.4.

4. C.O.696/1. Hillah Admin. Report 1918, p.135

examination of each tāpu sanad as an imperative and justified precondition to deciding the sanad's validity. Furthermore, it appears to me that no attempt at enforced and governmental collection of mellākiyah should have occurred without a proper and prior thorough investigation of land claims being completed.

Surprisingly this was not the 'course' of the British Administration land policy. In a rare and clear case of 'putting the cart before the horse' it was officially reported:

'Having granted that the Sa'dun possess certain rights to the land, verification of their title deeds is the next step. The fact that the Sa'dun may have no documentary evidence to their claims does not lessen, in any way, their vociferousness'.¹

Thus it was concluded that the absentee-landholders 'must be recognized as some form of landlords'.²

It ought to be remembered that the above-mentioned argument was not opinions or suggestions. It was the real course of the policy which the Administration had decided upon. After all the decision of governmental collection of mellākiyah was taken at the end of 1918, whereas the investigation committee was established in early 1920. Moreover, it was admitted in late 1921 that 'no attempt has been made on the intricate problem of demarcating boundaries, on which the whole subject of land ownership rests'.³

Thus it is evident that the government had decided on the extra-ordinary course of collecting mellākiyah from the actual cultivators on lands whose claimants possessed neither documentary evidence nor clearly defined boundaries.

(d) The Political Consequences of the British Land Policy: A policy of this 'peculiar' nature was justified (intended) as being only temporary, pending the verification of the sanads. In this regard it is highly interesting to find that the Government had neither brought the satisfaction of the landholders nor was able to avoid the wrath of the actual cultivators:

1. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report Muntafiq Division, 1921, p.61

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

'... vested interests such as absentee landlords and tribal overlords looked with disfavour on cadestral surveys, which would help to establish the prescriptive rights of cultivators ...'¹

On the other hand the Political Officer of Muntafiq wrote in 1919 that:

'He [the tribesman] views with the strongest disfavour and alarm the high rates of Mallakiyah he is now called upon to pay. It is useless to tell him that the present is only a temporary arrangement ... The great war is over, peace conditions obtain, land settlement grows nearer and his one fear is that he may be burdened for all time with a mere drone ...'²

It was pointed out that the 'chief mistakes' were made:

(1) By the collection and payment to the mallak of the same proportion of the produce of the land as that taken by Government, the mallaks have been given large ideas about the demands they can in future make on the tribes ...

(2) Government has incurred a very great deal of odium in the eyes of the tribes by the collection of Mallakiyah on behalf of the mallak'.³

The Assistant Political Officer of Naṣiriya suggested that the first mistake could be rectified if the Government lowered the maximum limit of the mellakiyah to a figure between 5 to 10 per cent. Furthermore, he argued that 'Government should on no account continue to collect mallakiyah on behalf of mallak ...'.⁴

The Political Officer of Hillah admitted that 'the so called legitimate demand which leaves only 40 per cent of the gross yield to the fellah, plus a small rebate to the sarkel, is obviously inequitable'.⁵ And in a confidential note dated 22nd October 1918, he suggested that 'no person or class, should, as a result of the British occupation, derive an excessive profit at the expense of any other person or class'.⁶

Thus it is clear that the British Officers on the spot were aware of the development of a formidable situation which was pregnant with alarming possibilities. Some of them were so far-sighted as to anticipate that agrarian

1. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.253.

2. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report Muntafiq, 1919, p.2. Italics mine.

3. Ibid., Muntafiq, Massiriyah, 1919, p.37

4. Ibid.

5. C.O.696/1. Hillah Admin. Report 1918, p.135

6. Ibid., p.136

grievances might well burst into political disturbances. Months before the rising, Major Hedgcock, the Political Officer of 'Amārah, warned against indications that the 'sarkels will in the near future raise the banner of Istiqlāl'.¹ He pointed out that although the average serkāḷ was better off than he was in Turkish days, yet 'he feels the injustice and tyranny of his shaikh more than formerly'.²

This, according to Major Hedgcock, was the outcome of two factors. The first was embodied in the fact that although 'it is true that the shaikh squeezed the sarkal as much then as he does now [1920], but the difference lies in the fact that whereas formerly the money was needed for the upkeep of the shaikh's hoshiyah [bodyguard], and for other expenses incidental to unsettled times, now it is extorted from the Sarkal to fill the already overflowing coffers of a prosperous shaikh'.³

It is a valid explanation. However, it did not grasp the core of the problem, namely, the socio-economic changes which were brought about by the introduction of the ṭāpu system and its practical enforcement by the British Administration. This system had altered or re-regulated the fellāh-Sheikh relationship. Whereas in the past when social association was established on the basis of Sheikh-tribesman affinity, it underwent certain changes which transferred it into a conflicting landholder-fellāh connexion. The conflict was furthermore intensified due to the development of the economy from one of subsistence to one of profit and market.

The Iraqi fellāh was not slow either in grasping the changes or in resenting them. He did not need 'sociological readings' to understand what was happening. Life itself divulged it to him. His reaction was quick and violent. The deteriorating position and 'degrading status' of the once popular and powerful Sa'dun among their 'former' followers was clear manifestation of such a militant awareness.

1. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report Amarah, 1920, p.26. Italics mine.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Furthermore, it did not take Thāmir al Khudāir (the chief sheikh of al Azāirij),¹ more than a couple of months to be ousted and shot dead by his own tribal men, once he accepted to become a tāpu holder, dared to collect mellākiyah and thus inflicted duim (injustice) upon his fellāhīn.² Moreover, it was reported that in early January 1920, Shaikh Thajīl al Jinah (the head of the Jinah section of the Bani Khaīqān confederation) tried to collect land rent from his cultivators as their landlord. The cultivators resented this ... and he was brutally murdered.³ In February 1920, Sheikh Hāshim al Ḥassun of the Nowashu al Ḥadr tribes was also killed for similar motives.⁴

Shortly after that, Sheikh Maīhud al Ṣagr of the albu Khalīfah tribe invited his tribesmen to discussion in regard to the payment of land revenue and taxes. His men accepted the invitation, but instead of a 'cordial discussion', they shot him dead and 'riddled his body with bullets'.⁵ It was officially concluded that:

'In all these cases the only motive for the crimes appears to have been a desire on the part of the tribesmen to rid themselves of the yoke of the Shaikh'.⁶

There was another factor which made the serkāī and the fellāh, under the British Administration, more aware of the landholder's injustices than 'formerly'. Similar to taxation, in Turkish days the severity of the terms was neutralised by the impossibility of enforcement. 'On tapu lands', commented the Political Officer of Hillah, 'conditions are obviously extortionate'. However, he pointed out:

'But in Turkish times, as might be expected, they were not enforced ... The Sarkal cheerfully signed any lease, whatever the terms, being firmly resolved to pay not an ounce more than he could help and knowing that it was not likely that any great compulsion would be employed by the Government. The lease, in fact, meant practically

1. Al Azāirij; a large tribe which was settled in the area extended from Amārah on the Tigris to some parts of the Muntafiq on the Euphrates.

2. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq Division 1919, Nassiriyah, p.21.

3. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq 1921, p.3. Bani Khaīqān; a confederated tribe which was settled in the Suq district.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p.4.

'nothing; what counted was the strength of each party when the crops were cut ... what is abundantly clear is that, with very few exceptions, the /mellāk/ never gathered his full due according to the share rule or according to the lease ...'.¹

The British Administration was proud of its efficiency and determined to enforce 'law and order'. It could not allow a situation of this sort to continue. But instead of altering 'the obviously extortionate conditions', the Administration decided to enforce them. The outcome of such a 'course' was cleverly summarized by the Political Officer of 'Amārah:

'Now /1920/, however, the Pax Britannica makes it unnecessary /for the landholder/ to retain the goodwill of the sarkal, who is thus entirely at the mercy of the /landholder/, the more so as the latter has reason to feel fairly confident that Government will not interfere between sarkal and shaikh'.²

It is precisely this point which could provide us with a better understanding of the tribal rising of summer 1920, and of the factors which enabled the tribal rising to assume a national form and role. The Turkish Administration was acting upon 'divide and rule' and was incapable of enforcing its taxation or its land policy. The British Administration was responsible neither for the introduction of the tāpu system nor for other land regulations. Nevertheless, the British accepted the Turkish rules at their face value and furthermore attempted the enforced implementation of such rules.

In the past the conflict was, to the Turk's convenience, of an inter-tribal character. By acting on behalf of the landholders, the British Administration had aided in transferring the conflict into a tribal-governmental one. Thus it was the British Administration who was, in a way, responsible for the unprecedented unity of the tribes who poured their anger and mutiny upon the Administration.

This began the process of turning a more or less perennial series of peasant rebellions into a rebellion of 'nationalist' aim and character. The tribal rising of 1920 was the outcome of tribal unity aiming at the liquidation of the political British presence. A goal which was shared by the town

1. C.O.696/1, Hillah Admin. Report 1918, p.135.

2. C.O.696/3. Amarah Admin. Report, 1920, p.26.

nationalists and the Shi'i 'Ulemā', who did not hesitate to exploit the development and extended political bridges to the discontented tribes.¹

The social nature of the uprising was revealed when it was officially reported that 'during the uprising, decisions in land disputes made by Assistant Political Officers were reopened and settled by bullets'.² On the other hand it was argued that the absentee-landlords class was not less worried than the Administration, of the outcome of the uprising.³ Gertrude Bell confirmed this impression and stated that some of Baghdad's notables who, at the beginning took a hand in the agitation, were horrified at the development of the uprising.⁴

Throughout this chapter, the writer has tried to show that the majority of the British Officers on the spot were, to say the least, not in favour of the adopted policy. Not a few of them had stated their open sympathy for the actual cultivators and their undisguised disrespect toward the landholders. It is highly interesting to find the higher Authorities in London were also cautious about committing the British Administration in Iraq to a hastily formulated land policy. In June 1918, the Foreign Office informed the India Office that:

'Mr. Balfour would suggest that a solution of the difficulty which has arisen would be for the state of Iraq, if such is formed, to acquire the /solution/ ... It would clearly be necessary to avoid adopting any permanent responsibility for the collection of rents, while at the same time avoiding any injustice to the chieftain class'.⁵

In early 1920, the India Office instructed the Civil Commissioner that:

'... Settlement Officers ... should abstain at this stage from definite acceptance and application of principles differing materially from basic principles of Turkish revenue administration'.⁶

Instructions and opinions of the above-mentioned nature raise some important questions as to the real motives and aims of the actual policy adopted by the Administration and was 'materially' different to that of the Turks. This leads the discussion into a new stage.

1. See Chapters 13 and 14

2. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq 1921, p.4. *My Italian*.

3. R. Coke, The Heart of the Middle East, (London, 1925), p.178.

4. Gertrude Bell, Private letters and Papers, ^{Newcastle} ~~op. cit.~~, a letter dated Baghdad, 30th August 1920.

5. F.O.371/3406/68571. From F.O, to the Under S. of S. of I.O., dated 17th June 1918, No.102207/W/44. Italics mine.

6. F.O.371/5070. From S. of S. of I.O. to C.C. Baghdad, dated 25th February 1920. Italics mine.

III. The British Administration and the Tribal System in Iraq.

In a highly important note entitled 'The Future of Mesopotamia',¹ Sir Percy Cox bluntly exposed the essence of the social order that the British Administration was attempting to establish in Iraq. Cox wrote:

'22. The elements that we most need to encourage are: Firstly, the Jewish community in Baghdad ... Secondly, the Arab notables and nobility among the townspeople of Baghdad and Basrah. They are a somewhat impecunious and backward element, but one which is very necessary to encourage and take into our counsels as far as possible. Thirdly the wealthy landlord element, both Arab and Jews, and the important Shaikhs of the settled tribes ...'²

In harmony with this line, the Civil Commissioner disclosed that the aim of his Administration was 'to secure the full benefit of co-operation by tribal leaders and large owners in the administration of these territories'.³

Once again we are faced with a manifestation of 'putting the cart before the horse'. A line of policy was decided upon. Consequences and political, administrative and moral considerations were only of secondary importance. However, this is not to suggest that Cox and Wilson had utterly neglected to examine the alternatives of the situation. It is those alternatives, the British choice and its tragic outcome, which will form the topics of the following discussion.

The implementation of such a line (proposed by Cox and Wilson) necessitated the 'revival' and enhancement of the already enfeebled tribal system. Such a necessity was not overlooked by the British Administration. In late 1919, the Civil Commissioner pointed out that 'it has been our policy to maintain and develop /the tribal organization in Mesopotamia'.⁴

It goes without saying that once this line of policy was decided by the

1. F.O.371/3387, dated London, 22nd April 1918. See Appendix VII.

2. Ibid. Italics original.

3. F.O.371/4152. To S. of S. for I.O., 10th November 1918, No.9696.

4. F.O.371/4152. From Political Baghdad to S. of S. for India, dated 10th November 1919, No. 9695. It is surprising that A.T. Wilson, in 1930, has written '... the conviction that the break-up of the tribal system was essential to orderly progress ... this belief was reflected in the gradual functional changes in the organization of the administration during 1919 and 1920 ...'.

A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.78.

head of the Administration, it was to be put into actual practice, with or without the approval of the Junior British Officers. Thus the Political Officer of Hillah stated, in his annual report for 1918, that his major aim throughout the year was the 'strengthening of the position of the Shaikh and solidifying of the tribal system'.¹ Major Nalder, the Political Officer of Ramādi, reported, in late 1917, that 'I am doing everything possible to establish Shaikh Dhari's² prestige. He appears to be working hard to establish his authority and I hope in time to get his influence felt throughout the whole tribe'.³ Major Dickson of the Nāsiriya Division wrote in late 1918: 'It has been my endeavour during my last three and a half years in the Muntafiq to get the power in each tribe into the hands of one man. This person is the Shaikh, and he is selected by the Government in each case'.⁴ In his annual report for 1919, the Political Officer of Hillah pointed out that 'Throughout the year the policy of maintaining and strengthening the authority of the Shaikh has been consistently followed and generally speaking the tribal system remains the basis of the district administration'.⁵

The tribal system in general, and the sheikh's authority in particular, could not be restored by wishful thinking or by administrative decrees, no matter how powerful was the proclaimer.⁶ The essence of the Iraqi tribal system had been largely dependent on the collective or communal ownership of the tribal land or dīra. It is hard to conceive the abolition of the common ownership of the land and, at the same time, the maintenance of the tribal system or the prestige of the propertied sheikh.

1. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports for 1918, Hillah, p.121.

2. Sheikh Dāri b. Dāhir b. Maḥmūd b. Sulīmān, sheikh of Zoba' (Sunni) tribe. He assumed a hostile attitude toward the British in the early days of the occupation (Baghdad Wilyat Admin. Rpt. 1917, pp.43-44). After a period of co-operation with the Administration, he participated in the rising of 1920.

3. C.O.696/1. Baghdad Wilyat Admin. Report, 1917, p.89

4. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports 1918, Nasiriya, p.351.

5. F.O.371/6348/99. 'Admin. Rpt. of the Hillah Division for the year 1919'.

6. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.77.

Such an intended task was made more difficult to achieve by the attempt of the Administration to reconcile two incompatible conditions: the recognition and enforcement of private land ownership and the attempt to revive the former strength and status of the tribal system. How did the Administration envisage such a combination is an open question.

The elapse of some ten years had apparently altered Wilson's views on the subject and made them more accurate and responsible. In referring in 1931 to the question mentioned above, he was to write:

'... it constituted one of the major problems with which we were faced, for it raised the whole question of the future form of Government in 'Iraq. Ought we to aim at a 'bureaucratic' form of administration ..., involving direct control by a central government, and the replacement of the powerful tribal confederation by the smaller tribal or sub-tribal unit as a prelude to individual in place of communal ownership of land, or should our aim be to retain, and, subject to suitable safeguards, to strengthen the authority of tribal chiefs, and to make them the agents and official representatives of government within their respective areas, The latter policy had been already adopted, in default of a better in the Basra wilayat and especially in the Muntafiq division ...'.¹

Even this description of the socio-political alternatives which faced the British is somehow limited. The Administration was not totally free in taking its decisions. The tribal system was already disintegrating and a noticeable detribalization process was effectively taking place. Wilson himself was to admit that:

'Our hands were not, of course, entirely free; some fifty years earlier the Turks had taken steps to break the power of the larger tribes in the Shamiya region by allotting part of their lands to smaller tribal groups and to Saiyids. The head of the smaller tribes had in turn divided the allotted lands amongst the heads of their families keeping only a portion for themselves. These original heads of families, now known as sarkals, have the same right as their chiefs to their land'.²

This development had its impact on the tribes who, according to Wilson, show themselves

'almost too ready to throw off their allegiance to their chiefs and to deal directly with civil officials in regard to revenue and other matters. This tendency showed itself during 1918³ in varying degrees in every district of Mesopotamia, ...'.⁴

However, the British Administration decided not to accelerate the process of detribalization but to put an end to it. The motives of such a plan, the methods used to carry it out, and the outcome of such a line are topics which the discussion will be divided into.

1. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.77.

2. Ibid.

3. It was at the close of 1918 that the Administration decided to put its weight in favour of the landholders.

4. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.77.

(a) The motives behind such a policy: It appears that the British Administration had identified its authority and prestige with that of the sheikh. Thus it was assumed that in order to restore the governmental control over the Euphrates tribes, it was necessary to reimpose the authority of the sheikh.

It was officially reported that since the early days of the British arrival in Iraqi tribal areas, 'it was assumed as an incontrovertible maxim that to administer the tribes properly it was essential to do so directly through their sheikhs'.¹ Such an intention was challenged by the prevailing conditions which were described as follows:

'Unfortunately the Turkish system of tribal Administration was based on a directly contrary principle, namely the principle of division, i.e., of the careful nursing of anarchy to prevent cohesion among the sections of a tribe. The Turkish axiom of division was carried out to such lengths that almost complete anarchy ruled throughout the Euphrates area, the tribes resenting the authority of their own Shaikhs ... almost as much as they still resent ... the sovereignty of Government'.²

Instead of analysing the grass roots of such a phenomenon (land ownership), the Administration leaped to a different deduction. The Political Officer of Muntafiq went on to point out that:

'The first aim of the civil administration, therefore, was to reduce this chaos to order by restoring their authority to the Shaikhs and using them, thus bolstered up with the confidence of British prestige, to restore the authority of Government throughout the area'.³

This line of policy was motivated by several factors. In the first place it was assumed that the sheikh might help in shouldering some of the administrative tasks which otherwise 'would press hard on the time of already overburdened political officers, and prove a lucrative source of income to Mamurs'.⁴

Major Wilson, the Political Officer of Kut al 'Amārah, gave a more comprehensive account of the Administration's outlook and expectation of the policy outlined above. He wrote:

1. C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports. Muntafiq, 1921, p.2.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.3.

4. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Hillah, 1919, p.17.

'It is difficult to overestimate the value of such a man /Muhammad Saihud Amir of Rabi'ah⁷, and he deserves all the assistance we can give him. It is moreover "Business" for us to assist him ... A big tribe such as the Rabi'ah under a strong overnment in peaceful times loses its raison d'etre and so becomes liable to disruption. Certain sections have been untiring in their efforts to gain their independence. Apart from the fact that the shortage of population and the work required make it necessary, it is still very much to the interest of Government, especially such as this, striving after "economy even at the expense of efficiency" to keep the big tribe together. Not only is it economical, but it has been proved more efficient ...

One big Shaikh can build a road, but 20 petty Shaikhs can not. Until we have reached a much more advanced stage than at present it would seem advisable to delay the inevitable breaking up'.¹

Major Dickson of Nasiriyah pointed to another factor behind such a policy. He wrote:

'Whereas one found 6 or 7 Shaikhs in each tribe all of equal standing (to say nothing of a host of pretenders) when we first occupied Nasiriyah and Suq, now we find one strong man, who, as a general rule, gets a subsidy from Government and knows it is worth his while to play straight'.²

In return for the assistance rendered to the sheikhs, the Administration required or demanded certain services of the sheikhs. These responsibilities, gathered from different Administrative Reports,³ could be summarized as follows:

1. Maintenance of Law and Order in the tribe on the area under their control.
2. 'Prompt payment of revenue' and assistance in the collection of revenue.
3. 'The collection and handing over to the landlord of the annual rental where such is possible'.
4. Protection of travellers and Government property and to assist in the maintenance of communications, telegraph, telephone, etc.
5. Arrest and surrender of offenders and 'malefactors'.
6. General good service and loyalty to Government.
7. Equitable conduct in settling disputes.
8. To assist in the maintenance of good relations between sub-tribes and other matters of similar nature.
9. Settling the smaller disputes among his tribesmen, and the larger ones that may be referred to him by his Assistant Political Officer.

1. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Kut al Amarah, 1919

2. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports, Nasiriyah, 1918, p.351.

3. Ibid. Also C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Hillah, 1919, p.18; also, Ibid., Shamiyah, 1919, p.2; also C.O.696/4. Admin. Reports, Muntafiq, 1921, p.4.

(b) The methods used to implement such a policy: However, the Administration was aware that the sheikh's authority was unable to fulfil these demands. Hence it was decided to enhance his prestige. And this was assumed to be accomplished by two other methods (apart from direct governmental support); financial allowances, and the introduction of the 'Tribal Disputes Regulations'.

It has been pointed out that 'popular opinion' was not on the sheikh's side, 'and it is difficult to find a force to compel the Sirkers /Serkals7, who form the majority, to comply fully with his orders which are based on the orders which he himself has received from the Government'.¹ Thus Captain O'Sullivan of Ramadi was to suggest that:

'Two remedies seem to offer themselves as solutions to this difficulty. One would be to subsidize him, enabling him to keep a small armed personal guard, actually in his own pay, who would be sufficient to urge on the /Serkals7 to adequate efforts, and to give a driving force behind his "unpopular" orders'.²

The other remedy was to include a sliding scale of fines that will be levied in direct ratio with his tribe's non-compliance with the orders issued to them.³

Furthermore, it seems that the Administration tried to give the sheikh a financial interest in the collection of revenue in his area.⁴ 'In pursuance of this policy certain remissions of the government share have been made /as early as 19177 in such a way as to give the Shaikh a share /in the revenue7'.⁵

Sir Arnold Wilson wrote:

'I had meanwhile /July 19177 authorized the grant of certain revenue concessions to the leading shaikhs in the Euphrates area in return for their cooperation'.⁶

The Administration's financial allowances to the sheikhs took several forms: subsidies and gifts, salaries, rebates, concessions and a share of the collected

1. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports, Baghdad Wilayat, Ramadi area, 1917, p.99.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. F.O.371/3406/139231. Admin. Report of Revenue Dept., Baghdad, 22nd March 31st December 1917.

5. Ibid.

6. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.57

revenue.¹ The writer sees no point in elaborating on this subject, save to mention that such allowances, not a few of which were deducted from taxes imposed on cultivators, were, virtually, futile and formed a further burden on the actual cultivators. In this respect it is sufficient to mention that during 1919, and in the Muntafiq Division alone, the Sa'duns received Rs.27,840; the sheikhs of Suq District (Albu Saleh, Hammār Sharqi and Gharbi) were paid Rs. 995 per month; in Nāşiriyah District the sheikhs (of al Ḥasan, Bani Khaīqān, Mugarrah, Sayid) Rs. 1,200 p.m. The sheikhs of Shaṭrah were in receipt of a monthly payment of Rs. 1,250, Qal'at Sikar was allowed Rs.200. Sheikh Khaiyun of al 'Ubaīd was receiving Rs.500 a month.²

Soon after the British occupation of some tribal areas in Iraq, the Administration was convinced that some specific legislation was necessary to enable Political Officers to dispose of civil and criminal cases in their district 'without referring to the Courts established in Basra, Amara and Nasiriya'.³ Thus the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation was drawn up by Mr. H.R.C. Dobbs. The Regulation was promulgated in February, 1916. And it was drawn on the lines of the Indian (North-West) Frontier Regulation known as the 'Sandeman System'.

The Regulation gave Political Officers authority to invoke a tribal majles (arbitrate body) to deal on tribal lines and in accordance with tribal customs with all cases in which any of the parties concerned was a tribesman. At the same time the Regulation invested the Political Officers with full magisterial powers to try cases which it may be expedient to refer to arbitration.⁴

Apart from genuine tribal aims and considerations, the Regulation 'raised the importance of the shaikhs by giving them a recognized place in the political and legal system. The Political Officers, on their side, found that considerable

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1. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports Nassiriyah, 1918, p.351. Major Dickson pointed out that every sheikh in his Division was paid Rs.200/- p.m. (Salaries of Mudir excluded). Also, Ibid., Baghdad Wilyat Admin. Report, 1917, p.91.
 2. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports Muntafiq, 1919, Appendix C and D.
 3. F.O.882/27. Arab Bulletin No.86, dated 21st April 1918, Mesopotamia. Tribal Disputes Regulation.
 4. Ibid.

work was taken off their shoulders'.¹

The Regulation proved to be of considerable assistance to the Administration and its personnel. On the other hand it did not lack certain drawbacks. It was officially reported that:

'Tribal law is not an effective deterrent to crime, in that the liability to punishment lies not on the individual who commits the crime, but the family, sub-tribe or tribe to which he belongs. The share of a blood fine which the actual criminal in fact pays may thus be insignificant'.²

Furthermore, 'Over one point of tribal justice the views of the tribesmen and of the Political Officers often clashed. In cases of murder arising out of a blood feud, the tribesmen were accustomed to regard fasl or payment of money and usually of women, as sufficient to settle the score and to end the feud. Imprisonment or capital punishment was thus considered not only harsh but unnecessary'.³

Another method which was used by the Administration to enhance its position among the tribes was the recruitment of some tribesmen into a security force called shabana. The total number of this force at the end of 1917 stood at about 1,500. In April 1920 there were about 4,800 shabana, about 800 of whom were Kurds; the remainder were Arabs, with a proportion of Persians.⁴

Such a step had its advantages, both to the Administration and to the development of Iraq. However it was ironic that one of its outcomes was to foil the British attempts. 'It tended to weaken the authority of the Shaikhs over their tribes, to deprive them of some of their best men, to break down the hard and fast line between tribes ...'.⁵

Furthermore, such a move failed to give the Administration the favourable image it desired to have among the tribes. Instead, the members of the shabana were isolated, loathed and hated by the tribes. The Civil Commissioner wrote:

1. P.W. Ireland, op. cit., p.86

2. C.O.696/2. Report on the Administration of Justice for the year 1919, p.6

3. P.W. Ireland, op. cit., p.86

4. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.86

5. Ibid., p.69

'They /shabana/ were openly called infidels in the streets and were refused food in the bazaars and coffee-shops, and vessels from which they had drunk were publicly broken. Their women would crowd round the barracks, calling on their husbands and sons to come and protect them. To stay with the Levies meant to many that they would be disowned by their tribes: in several cases their wives were violated, carried off, or even killed ...'.¹

The obloquy in which the name of shabana was once held was so great that a shabana was often refused the reply to his sallām 'Alaikum as an infidel.²

The British Administration policy made the sheikh occupy 'the position of a government official' and allowed him to exercise 'functions which are little removed from Magisterial and Judicial'.³ However, such a policy proved to be futile and dangerous. It failed to 'resurrect' the waning influence of the sheikh and it invited the indignation of the tribesmen.

(c) The outcome of such a policy: The failure of the Administration's endeavour was decided in advance by its very attempt to reconcile contradictory positions or tasks. It was hard for the sheikh to be, at the one time, a landlord and a recognized leader of his tribe. It was also difficult to the sheikh to earn the respect of his tribe while he was asked to collect taxes from his tribesmen on behalf of the Government. The Political Officer of Muntafiq gave the following balanced account:

'The position today /1921/ is that though he may be willing to carry out these services, the Shaikh is incapable of doing so. He cannot serve two masters. To be popular with the tribe he must fall in with the views of his tribesmen and their sectional leaders /the serkāls/ whose general outlook if summed up would be "if the Government can enforce payment of revenue we will pay, but not otherwise".

The waning influence of the Shaikh is, however, not entirely due to the lack of support by Government. His authority was forced on the tribes and on the strength of this he seized every opportunity of exacting what he considered his rightful due from his unwilling tribesmen. Now he can take no more and when asked to carry out any of the services expected from him as a shaikh of the tribe, his immediate reply is a request for force. He is averse from paying up his own revenue demands and at the same time he is unable to collect any taxes from his tribesmen'.⁴

1. Ibid., p.70

2. C.O.696/3. Admin Report. Arab and Kurdish Levies and Gendarmerie, 1915-1920

3. F.O.371/6348/99. Admin. Report of the Hillah Division for the year 1919.

4. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report Muntafiq, 1921, p.4.

The above argument indicates that the British policy was not only unproductive but rather counter-productive. The sheikhs had abused the authority invested in them by the Government and used it for their personal aggrandizement. The other sheikhs and tribesmen resented the growing power of the Government sheikhs. They identified their power and conduct with that of the Government itself. In Gertrude Bell's words 'The policy of backing the shaikh had its drawbacks. He is a petty tyrant whose misdeeds reflect on the Government which support him'.¹ Thus it was logical that the resentment of the property-tied sheikhs was bound to assume an anti-government line and pour within the wide stream of the independence movement.

The social and national character of the 1920 uprising was clearly revealed by the 'significant fact that when the Assistant Political Officers of districts were evacuated, Paramount Shaikhs - who until then had been bolstered up by British gold and British bayonets - left with them ... until British columns again marched through their districts'.²

In a well-balanced evaluation of British tribal policy, Major Hedgcock went on to argue, 'as a matter of fact he /the sheikh/ is more or less of a figurehead, with very little power beyond that which he obtains from the support of Government. This individuality of the shaikh, ... counts for very little'.³ The Political Officer of 'Amarah concluded that:

'We have fallen into the error of over-rating his /the sheikh/ value and consulting him too much, to the exclusion of educated and far-seeing men of other classes. For instance, on the 'Amarah Council of Notables there are eleven shaikhs to five townsmen, the sarkal and fallah, who form by far the largest proportion of the inhabitants of the Division, being unrepresented'.⁴

Even from an agricultural point of view, it seems that the Administration have 'lost sight of the fact that the shaikh does not represent agricultural

1. Cmd. 1061, op. cit., p.143

2. C.O.696/4. Admin Report, Muntafiq, 1921, pp.4-5

3. C.O.696/3. Admin Report, Amarah, 1920, p.26

4. Ibid.

interests from the point of view of either the sarkāl or the fellāh;¹ in fact it was argued that the 'sheikh' was

'... usually ignorant, narrow-minded, and unprogressive, extremely selfish and possessed of an inordinate greed for money. He will never recommend any scheme which, however beneficial to the rest of the community, touches his pocket or his dignity in the slightest degree. Consequently the fact that most of the wealth and land of the Division is in the hands of a few tribal shaikhs causes a certain amount of ill feeling'.²

It is difficult to hide a certain admiration for the flexible, intelligent and pragmatic British approach. In the depth of their 'misguided' policy, they were able to pin-point an alternative course which, furthermore, was to be finally adopted. 'As official knowledge grew, so did the conviction that the break-up of the tribal system was essential to orderly progress under whatever form of organized government might be constituted in future. This belief was reflected in the gradual functional changes in the organization of the administration ...'.³ Such a new radical change in the British policy was to take place immediately after the uprising of 1920 which gave ample evidence as to the futility of the old policy.

The Administration was aware of the rising power of the serākīl and of their general desire to throw off all vestige of control by the sheikh and to 'deal direct with the local executive in all matters concerning themselves and government'.⁴ In fact it was as early as 1917 that the Administration was aware of the necessity 'to work down to the sarkāl'.⁵ However, such a view was dismissed due to the 'danger' of encouraging 'the already rapidly moving process of disintegration be accelerated and the power of the shaikh weakened'.⁶ Furthermore, it was as early as 1916 that the British Intelligence in the Euphrates reported that al Khazā'il tribe (who live in the area between Samāwah and Kufah)

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., pp.26-7

3. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.78

4. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report, Muntafiq 1921, p.4.

5. F.O.371/3406/68571. Admin. Report. Revenue Board, Baghdad 22nd March - 31st December 1917, p.24

6. Ibid.

have sent a letter to the British Authorities offering assistance to the British troops upon their arrival in Samāwah.¹ It was a sign of profound understanding that the British Intelligence commented on such an offer:

'We could not, however, reckon on much support from the Arab tribes on the Euphrates. Although at present specially anti-Turk, they are probably, as the /Political Officer/ of Nasiriyah observes, anti any government, and wish to remain independent'.²

It is surprising that all of those wise notions and profound assessments were shelved in favour of a policy which, basically, had no objective justifications. The growing and productive power of the serākīl and the unpropertied sheikhs was sacrificed for the advantage of feeble and selfish landholders. The genuine and established desire of tribesmen and fellāhīn for autonomous conditions was overlooked and, instead, a rigid, over-taxed and a highly centralized form of governmental administration was imposed. Thus it is not an exaggeration to suggest that the British Administration was, in the final analysis, acting as undertaker of its own funeral.

The 'ill-feelings' of the fellāhīn, serākīl and the unpropertied sheikhs were to reach a point of no return. The arrest by Major Daly of Sheikh Sh'alān abu al Jun (29th June 1920) was the final straw which broke the camel's back. In summer 1920, the whole of the Mid-Euphrates sprang to arms. The Administration and its 'spoiled' sheikhs were swept out of the area. The uprising expanded to Diyāla and Ramādi; and Baghdad was haunted by a destiny resembling that of Gordon Pasha's Khartoum.

Peasant involvement in national politics was brought about by certain socio-economic changes and land regulations which were introduced by the Turks. British enforcement of such measures intensified the fellāhīn engagement in politics. Nevertheless such a participation remained within a limited scope. The fellāhīn 'struggle' advanced from inter-tribal to anti-government and from local to regional. However it did not assume final unity or identification with the nationalists.

1. F.O.882/26/Arab Bulletin, 38. Euphrates Intelligence, December 1916

2. Ibid.

The basic demand of the unpropertied sheikhs was the acquisition of the cultivated land. ^{Some} They were aware that the Administration was coming to the conclusion that when 'a sheikh holds a huge tract of land the cultivators of which all belong to a different tribe from his own ... he should be made to give it up to experienced farmers capable of improving that land.¹ Some of the unpropertied sheikhs were acquainted with a view among the Administration advocating that the British should 'make the tribesmen into landowners with a chance of themselves taking out tapu papers eventually ...'.² In short some sheikhs comprehended that the Administration was about to review its policy.

Such an awareness was to water down the conflict and to neutralize and alienate some sheikhs from the movement. Others assumed a two faced attitude. On the one hand they allowed their tribesmen to revolt, occupy official buildings and raise upon it the flag of al Istiglāl. On the other hand they protected the British Officials and resisted all attempts at the expansion of the rising into surrounding areas and declined to offer any substantial assistance to the forces of the insurrection in their battles with the British Army.

This attitude casts some light on the reasons behind the failure of the rising in transforming itself into a striking force beyond the limited tribal areas. Furthermore, it allowed the Administration ample time to gather its forces and thus strike its counter-blow which ended the uprising. After concluding its victory the Administration rewarded its 'Trojan Horse'. Its gratitude was translated into large tracts of land presented to, for instance, Sheikh Khaiyun,³ of whom the Administration promised that 'Whatever may be the

1. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report Amarah, 1920. pp.26-7.

2. F.O.371/3406/102207. Report by Capt. H.R.P. Dickson, A.P.O. Suq-ash-Shuyukh dated 9th May 1917.

3. Sheikh Khaiyun al 'Ubaid delayed his submission to the British Authorities to as late as 1918. On his first visit, the Political Officer of Nasiriyah (Major Dickson) had to appoint Khaiyun as British representative in Shatrah. 'Khaiyun is the strongest and most influential man in the district. He has been Turkish Qaimmaqam of Shatrah ... Cordially hated and inexpressibly feared, he has always ruled Shatrah with a rod of iron.'

C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports 1918, Shatrah, p.381

In 1921 it was officially reported that 'tribal disintegration fostered by
contd...

future form of Government of this country, Shaikh Khaiyun's services should not be forgotten'.¹ And indeed they were not 'forgotten'.

However, the peasant uprising rendered the Iraqi independence movement a priceless service. It was the final blow which proved the futility of Wilson's plans; it drove the British Government into adopting a new policy; it displayed the strength of the Iraqi Arab nationalism and gave the Iraqi nationalists a powerful position to negotiate from. The creation of the Iraqi state was largely due to the mass political explosion of the Iraqi fellāhīn of summer 1920.

Nevertheless, it remains true that those fellāhīn had gained the least from the products of their own movement. It was the Iraqi officers and officials who were to run the country after 1920. Some of the unpropertied sheikhs were to acquire land, but the bulk of the fellāhīn and serākīl were left unpropertied and underprivileged.

Years after the events, Sheikh Sh'alān was entertaining Glubb Pasha. He complained of the 'futile' blood shed of his tribesmen. 'But now you have an independent state, a king and an Arab Administration. What more do you want?' replied the British General. 'Yes Pasha, all that is true, but we got nothing of it', Sh'alān said.²

Sh'alān's evaluation was very accurate indeed. Nevertheless, perhaps he was not aware of the distinction between what politically is accidental and perpetual. 'The peasants' chances of influencing the political sphere increase sharply in times of national crises. When non-peasant social forces clash, when rulers are divided or foreign powers attack, the peasantry's attitude and action

3 contd. the Turkish Government ... is already a fait accompli. There are now three classes /in Muntafiq/. 1. The powerful and paramount shaikhs. 2. The Shaikhs of a tribe whose influence mainly depends on Government support, and 3. The Sarkals or leaders of sections and sub-sections of tribes predominantly numerical ... In the case of (1) there are only three men in this division, who can be regarded as wielding the influence of paramount Shaikhs; Salim al Khaiyun of Bani Asad, Badr al Rumaiyidh of Albu Sahih and Khaiyun al 'Ubaid of the 'Abudah tribe in the Gharrāf.

C.O.696/4. Admin. Report, Muntafiq, 1921, p.5.

1. C.O.696/3, Admin Report, Muntafiq, 1920, p.11.

2. Personal communication, dated 1970.

may well prove decisive. Whether this potential is realized is mainly dependent upon the peasants' ability to act in unison, with or without formal organization. This in turn, is dependent upon the cohesion of the peasantry, its economic, social and cultural homogeneity as well as interaction and, on the reflection of these in the ideological sphere'.¹

Most of the above-mentioned conditions of enhancing the peasantry's chances of influencing the outcome of Iraqi politics were, to some extent, in evidence. 'Yet in the long run it is the basic weakness of the peasantry which has tended to stand out. The peasantry has proved no match for smaller, closely knit, better organized and technically superior groups, and has, time and again, been "double-crossed" or suppressed politically and by force of arms ...'.²

It seems the Iraqi fellāhīn, in spite of all their sacrifices and major contribution to the independence movement, could not escape the 'general' rules of peasantry political-sociology. 'Once again the course of historical development seems to weaken peasants' political influence'.³ Iraqi fellāhīn plough and sow the land but it was not they who harvested the end-product.

1. T. Shanin, 'The Peasantry as a Political Factor', Sociological Review, Vol.14, 1966, No.1, p.21.

2. Ibid., p.20

3. Ibid.

CHAPTER XII

THE GENERAL REFERENDUM OF 1918-1919

1. The Reasons behind the Referendum

The 1918 General Referendum in Iraq played an important role in the subsequent history of that country. Its motivation throws considerable light on the conflicting views of British policy-makers concerning Iraq. Its conduct reflected a profound conflict between the British Administration in Iraq and its allies on the one hand and the rising independence movement on the other. The Referendum had accelerated the process of polarization into two major groups and hastened their clash.

Some Iraqi historians were inclined to explain the move towards the Referendum as a 'liberal' step adopted by the British Government to express its displeasure with Wilson's policies in Iraq.¹ This may be partially true.² By comparing the two texts (the proposal³ and the acceptance⁴) it is easy to discern the profound differences between the aims reflected in the two texts. However, the fact remains that it was Wilson who initiated the suggestion of holding a plebiscite. On the 24th November, 1918, Wilson telegraphed the India Office suggesting the idea of a referendum: 'All agree that opinion of the country must be taken before any decision can rightly be come to ...'.⁵

Nevertheless, Wilson did not allow any illusions about his motives. He explicitly stated his aim: 'The opinion of the country must be taken ... on the clear understanding of the inhabitants of the country themselves, that a protectorate will in due course be declared and that, for the present, military administration will continue'. Wilson finished his telegram with the significant conclusion 'I do not doubt that our confidence will be justified by results'.⁶ Why did Wilson suggest the plebiscite since

1. Al Ḥassani, al Thawra al 'Irāqiya al Kubra, (Sida, 1965), p.32.

2. H. Young, The Independent Arab, (London, 1933). On p.280 Young did not indicate that it was Wilson who suggested the referendum.

3. A.T. Wilson, A Clash of Loyalties, (London, 1931), pp.108-109.

4. F.O.882/23, telegram from S. of S. for India to Political Baghdad, 28th November 1918.

5. A.T. Wilson, A Clash of Loyalties, op. cit., p.108.

6. Ibid.

he had already decided its result in advance?

Most Iraqi historians have argued that Wilson was 'distorting' and 'falsifying' the referendum which was only a 'folly', 'myth' and 'tragic comedy'.¹ On the other hand, a historian of considerable repute accepted that Wilson's confidence was well founded:

'He [Wilson] counted, rightly, on the fact that the Sharifians were quite unknown in the area, and on the political tradition of a country like Mesopotamia, which holds it dangerous to express dislike of the ruler of the moment, to obtain evidence with which to support the policy he was urging the Government in London'.²

The argument of the Iraqi 'nationalist' historian represents only half the truth. Although there was an open interference by the authorities in the procedure of the referendum, it was also true that there was a considerable trend among the Iraqis which favoured the continuance of the British Administration.

As for Kedourie's explanation, one would like to point out two objections. Firstly, it is not very accurate to state that 'the Sharifians were quite unknown in the area'. Wilson himself pointed out that 'a son of King Husain would meet with widespread acceptance in Baghdad and would probably be well received elsewhere, and in particular by the Shiahs of Mesopotamia, on account of the well-known latitude of King Husain's religious views'.³ Moreover, and referring to the same period with which we are dealing, Kedourie himself stated explicitly that 'Sharifian propaganda in Mesopotamia was well organised'.⁴ Secondly, there is the problem of the 'interpretation' of the 'political tradition' of Iraq. It is obvious that Wilson was by no means responsible for such a tradition. But what Kedourie forgot to mention was that Wilson had encouraged such a 'political tradition' of fear and intimidation by a series of administrative orders.

1. M.M. al Basir, Tārīkh al Qadiya al 'Irāqīya, (Baghdad, 1924), p.81. Also al Hassani, op. cit., pp.32, 44. Also al Fir'on, op. cit., p.69.

2. Elie Kedourie, England and the Middle East, (London, 1956), p.184.

3. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.108.

4. E. Kedourie, op. cit., p.182.

For one reason or another, even after the Anglo-French declaration, Wilson was under the impression that the British Government generally shared his own views. 'Everything indicated that the French in Syria, and the British in Iraq, intended to create effective protectorates, and that the Anglo-French declaration was not intended to be taken literally'.¹ After all, it was the Secretary of State for India who assured Wilson that the 'intention of the Anglo-French Declaration was primarily to clear up the existing situation in Syria which Arab suspicion of French intention had created. It should be understood by all that the Peace Conference will settle the ultimate status of all Arab provinces'.² However, Wilson's understanding of the telegram was selective. In the same telegram it was stated:

'It is laid down meanwhile in the Declaration that H.M.G. will as part of their policy assist in the establishment of native government in the liberated area, and do not intend to impose on the population any government which is distasteful to them'.³

Moreover, it was as early as the 12th March 1918, when his friend, Hirtzel, warned him:

'Entirely different currents are flowing now, and we must shape our course to them if we are to get what we want in Iraq. The old watchwords are obsolete, and the question is how we are to secure what is essential under the new ones. The thing can be done, but certain re-orientation is necessary. The 'Arab facade' may have to be something rather more solid than we had originally contemplated'.⁴

One can sum up Wilson's plans for the political future of Iraq as having two aims. First, Iraq should be a united political entity (i.e. Mosul, Baghdad and Basrah were to form one political unit). Secondly, Iraq should remain for a considerable period of time under the direct control of the British.

Against such a notion there were many hostile trends and opinions, some of which enjoyed a considerable influence. In the first place, the unity of Iraq was disputed, mainly with reference to the problem of Mosul. Further-

1. Wilson, op. cit., p.110.

2. F.O.882/23, dated 28th November 1918,

3. Ibid. The telegram should be understood in its totality which represents a dichotomy in attitude and the predicament of the British Government over the political future of Iraq.

4. Wilson, op. cit., p.166, footnote.

more, Wilson's plans for the political future of Iraq were seriously challenged by the growing boldness of the 'Nationalists' inside and outside Iraq, and the growing influence of 'Arab sympathizers' inside the British Government circles. This was coupled with certain doubts on the part of the higher British authorities and the 'evacuationist' tendencies of the British Press.¹ These new winds blowing in Iraq, alarmed Wilson who gradually became aware that he was not the sole representative of British Government policy towards Iraq. In short, he wanted an Iraqi mandate to support him and to satisfy the liberal tendency in Britain and abroad. As for Iraqi opposition, which he had always underestimated, he thought that he was able to put an end to its mounting aggression which he attributed to the encouragement given from certain British circles in Damascus, Cairo and London.

According to the Sykes-Picot agreement, Mosul² was allocated to the French sphere of influence.³ This was contrary to the Hussein-McMahon agreement in which Mosul was to be part of the proposed Arab State.⁴ Furthermore, it was in conflict with the actual realities of political life. Mosul was occupied by British troops, unaided by Arabs or French, on the 7th November 1918. Moreover, the very promising reports on the rich oil potentialities in Mosul would have made the British extremely reluctant to hand over such an opulent land. But France, ignoring the above fact, insisted on its rights in Mosul. Britain, who was divided between her 'European policy' and her 'Imperial interest' had to act very cautiously so as not to provoke France or sacrifice her own Imperial interests. Thus, the idea of a referendum, in which the people of Iraq and the inhabitants of Mosul would show their desire for political unity seemed a suitable solution to this problem. Anyhow, in his first visit to England,

1. F.O.882/23/3133. Telegram No.10973, 10th December 1918 from Political Baghdad to S. of S. for India London. Wilson was complaining of a series of articles in The Times.

2. Dr. Fāḍil Hussein, Mushkilat al Musil, (Baghdad, 1955). Originally a Ph.D. thesis to Indiana University, U.S.A., 1952.

3. Mosul was part of Area (A) in the Sykes-Picot agreement.

4. See the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, in particular McMahon's second letter, dated Cairo, 24th October 1915.

Clemenceau, in a moment of generosity and expectation, gave up France's claim to Mosul.¹

The dispute with Turkey over Mosul was of a more serious nature. After all, France was an ally, while Mosul, in Turkish hands, 'would constitute not only a constant menace against the English in Iraq (Baghdad) and the French in Syria, but would place the Turks in possession of all the routes of invasion descending on Aleppo, Baghdad and Damascus'.² Moreover, the Turkish claims on Mosul were more plausible than those of France. For Turkey, the occupation of Mosul occurred in 'violation' of the Armistice Agreement. The Mudros Armistice was declared on the 30th October 1918, and all hostilities between the Turks and the British were to cease as from noon local time on the 31st October 1918.³ On the 2nd November, Baghdad received orders from the War Office to occupy Mosul. General Marshall, who by the 31st October, was fourteen miles south of Mosul, was given new orders. He carried out the instruction and occupied Mosul.⁴ The Turkish Commander although he did not resist the British advance, registered his protest in the surrendering document. The British justified their action by referring to Clause 7 of the Armistice.⁵ Whether this clause justifies the British occupation of Mosul or not 'it was evident that the British forces were determined that the Turks should evacuate the entire region'.⁶

Turkey refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the British occupation of Mosul. Ismet Pasha summed up the Turkish case for demanding back Mosul on the basis that the majority of its population were not Arabs but Kurds and Turks,

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1. David Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference, 2 vols., (New Haven, 1939), Vol.2, p.673.
 2. Harry N. Howard, The Partition of Turkey; A Diplomatic History 1913-23, (Norman, 1931), p.298.
 3. Article 25(XXV) of Mudros Armistice cited by H.W.V. Temperley, A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, 6 Vols., (London, 1920-24), Vol.VI, p.497.
 4. Wilson, op. cit., pp.16-21.
 5. Article 7(VII) of the Mudros Armistice, cited by H.W.V. Temperley, op. cit., p.496.
 6. Harry N. Howard, The Great Powers and Partition of Turkey, Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1929. Cited by Henry Foster, The Making of Modern Iraq - a Product of World Forces, (London, 1936), p.107.

that geographically and politically it was part of Anatolia, and that the possession of Mosul was indispensable for Turkey's economic life and security.¹ He raised the question of the 'illegitimate' occupation of Mosul.²

All these points could be disputed, but, what is really important in Ismet Pasha's argument was his claim that:

'The inhabitants of the Wilayet demand that they may be restored to Turkey, for they know that in that event they will cease to be a colonized people and become citizens of an independent state'.³

The consistent refusal of Turkey to accept the British occupation of Mosul was a source of political headache to Wilson, especially since he was aware of a strong pro-Turkish sympathy in Mosul particularly among the ex-servicemen of that district. Such uncertainty alarmed Wilson, who was convinced that 'whatever form of government might ultimately be established in Mesopotamia, it was vital to its effective continuance that it should cover the three Wilayets of Basrah, Baghdad and Mosul'.⁴ Wilson, at the same time, was quite aware that such a view ran counter to the theories underlying the Sykes-Picot agreement and the tentative instruction already promulgated by H.M.G.⁷ as to the future governance of the Wilayets of Basra and Baghdad respectively'.⁵

As far as the political future of Iraq was concerned, the challenges which Wilson had to confront were of a decisively alarming nature. The cessation of hostilities had apparently left the British Government without a definite and fixed policy to be adopted in Iraq and with a heritage of conflicting commitments and demands which needed to be sorted out. Thus the door was open for several schools and trends of political opinion to propose various solutions which were not necessarily compatible with those of Wilson.

The first signal came on the 8th January 1918 with the declaration of President Wilson's 'Fourteen Points'. Article twelve of these principles was of special importance owing to its relevance to the ex-Turkish territories which

1. Cmd. 1814, Turkey No.1 (1923), pp.351-2, Clauses 1,3,4 and 5.

2. Ibid., Clause 6.

3. Ibid., pp.351-2, Clause 2.

4. F.O.371/5127. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O., 18th November 1918.

5. Ibid.

were promised the right of self determination. The real blow came with the publication of the Anglo-French Declaration on the 8th November 1918. Here the Allies committed themselves openly and without reservations to the 'setting up of national governments and administrations that shall derive their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations'. The Declaration continued 'France and Great Britain agree to further and assist in the setting up of indigenous governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia'.¹

Gertrude Bell wrote 'Given the short period of time, it would have been difficult to arouse more sound and fury, not to speak of heartburnings and intrigue, than have been created in Baghdad by the declaration ...'.² For Wilson the Declaration was a 'disastrous error':³ to him 'it was a veritable bombshell shattering in advance the gigantic imperial structure of which he had long dreamed as covering the whole area of the Middle East'.⁴

The Civil Commissioner's opposition to the Anglo-French Declaration was clearly made in his telegram to the India Office:

'I will not be doing my duty if I did not first of all record my conviction that the Anglo-French Declaration ... in so far as it refers to Mesopotamia, bids fair to involve us in difficulties ... the Declaration involves us in ... diplomatic insincerities ... and places a potent weapon in the hands of those least fitted to control a nation's destinies ... The Arabs of Mesopotamia will not tolerate that foreign Arabs should have any say in their affairs ... the average Arab, as opposed to a handful of amateur politicians of Baghdad, sees the future as one of fair dealing and material and moral progress under the aegis of Great Britain ... With the experience of my Political Officers behind me, I can confidently declare that the country as a whole neither expects nor desires any such sweeping scheme of independence as it is adumbrated, if not clearly denoted, in the Anglo-French Declaration'.⁵

A few days later, on the 18th November, the Secretary of State for India telegraphed to Wilson the following proposals:⁶

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1. F.O.371/5153/E213.
 2. F.O.371/4150/5394. Memorandum No.524, Baghdad, 22nd February 1919, from Lt.-Col. A.T. Wilson to the Under Secretary of State for India, p.7.
 3. Wilson, op. cit., p.103.
 4. H.B. Philby, Arabian Days, (London, 1948), p.173.
 5. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.104.
 6. Ireland, op. cit., p.156.

'Colonel Lawrence has submitted proposal to H.M. Government for dealing with Arab question. He advocates viz. 1. Lower Mesopotamia, 2. Upper Mesopotamia; 3. Syria, to be placed respectively under Abdullah, Zeid and Feisal, sons of King Hussain. ... It is of course understood that both states would be in the British sphere and Lower Mesopotamia under effective British control'.

The telegram was ended by a request for Wilson's views on those proposals 'with as little delay as possible'.

These proposals were in complete contrast to Wilson's views, and also confirmed his fears about the degree of influence that the British Government had allowed to the 'Arab School'. Thus, he replied asking his government to 'exclude this country definitely once and for all from any contemplated Sharifian settlement'.¹ 'I urged', Wilson wrote, 'as did Sir Percy Cox in 1917, that the Wilayats of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul should be regarded as a single unit for administrative purposes, under effective British control'.² A few days later Wilson explained his reasons for opposing the establishment of an Arab state (ruled by a Sharifian) in Iraq. In the first place he emphasised the Shi'i majority of Iraq which he claimed was 'bitterly opposed to the idea of Arab unity under the auspices of the Sunnis'.³ Wilson also raised the subject of the animosity of ibn Sa'ud to the Sharifians. He argued that:

'If we encourage the idea of Arab, as opposed to European predominance in Arab speaking territories ... we shall without doubt excite latent religious hatreds between Sunni and Shi'ah in Iraq, thereby depriving ourselves of some of the strategic advantages which the possession of this ganglion gives us'.⁴

Wilson also pointed out that:

'To pursue our present Arab policy may in certain circumstances have the effect of creating a series of Muhammadan States, having nothing in common except their religion and their anti-European, that is to say racial, prejudices. This would result in the negation of progress and the destruction of the hope of peace within a reasonable period in the Middle East'.⁵

Against such a background Wilson proposed the idea of holding a plebiscite to ascertain public opinion.⁶ 'Anyhow, in the same telegram he gauged

1. Ibid. Telegram 10031, 20th November 1918, p.157.

2. Wilson, op. cit., p.107

3. F.O.882/23/3133. From Political Baghdad, to S. of S. for India. No.10973, 10th December 1918.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.108.

the educated opinion in Iraq as running on the following lines:

'Idea of Arab kingdom without British advice, assistance or control is put aside ... Arab State under an Arab Amir, including Basra, Baghdad and Mosul is considered an ideal solution ... British High Commissioner and British Advisers in all the Ministries of the Arab State and throughout the Country are unanimously desired ... All agree in wishing Sir Percy Cox to be the first incumbent of the post. This feeling is general to my personal knowledge all over Iraq, particularly in Najaf and Karbala and in the country districts, where his name carries the greatest weight'.

Wilson then went on to discuss the merits of the various names that had been unofficially put forward as possible candidates for the Amirate of Iraq. The names he discussed in that telegram were: (1) Hādi Pasha al 'Umari; (2) Member of family of Sultan of Egypt; (3) Son of Sharif of Mecca; and, (4) Naqīb of Baghdad.¹ In a separate telegram, Wilson discussed the nomination of the Sheikh of Muḥammarah as a possible Amir of Iraq.² As for the latter, Wilson stated that:

'His /Sheikh of Muḥammara/ case put very briefly in his own words is as follows ... Shiah, loyal ... As Amir I shall be the necessary figurehead for Arab state and shall in all matters act in accordance with wishes and orders of /H.M.G./'.³

However Wilson argued that 'on general political grounds, however, his success would be little short of disastrous', because 'it would raise throughout Iraq latent animosity between Shiah and Sunni ...'.⁴ A few days later the Civil Commissioner received a telegram from the India Office accepting his argument, and asking him to 'take steps ... to discourage his candidature'.⁵

Wilson concluded that none of the above-mentioned candidates was suitable for the Amirate of Iraq. He therefore was to suggest that:

'A possible alternative has not yet been discussed in Baghdad but if I might be authorised to suggest it would probably meet with immediate acquiescence in Baghdad and would be even more acceptable to the rural districts, namely, that Sir Percy Cox should be appointed High Commissioner for the first five years without any Arab Amir or other head of the State, but with Arab Ministers backed by British Advisers'.⁶

1. Ireland, op. cit., p.158.

2. F.O.882/23/3133 MES/19/7. No.11454, 22nd November 1918.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. F.O.141/444/File 12215, From S. of S. for India to C.C. Baghdad, No.11608, 27th November 1918.

6. Wilson, op. cit., p.108.

The 'Inter-departmental Committee'¹ in its meeting on the 27th November considered the telegram of Wilson and decided to authorize him to hold a referendum in Mesopotamia.²

It seems that up to that time the 'Inter-departmental Committee' had been unable to formulate a definite policy concerning Iraq. A minute concerning the meeting mentioned above, shows up the radical differences between several trends of opinion about the future of Iraq. We are already aware of Colonel Lawrence's proposals which were discussed in the same meeting. Apart from that, General MacDonogh submitted a memorandum on the 4th November 1918 in support of a single state unifying the three Wilayats. He also suggested that 'Abdullah should be the head of the new state with a direct British Administration controlled by a British Resident.'³ Commander Hogarth of the Arab Bureau submitted a memorandum on the 15th November 1918 suggesting that Mosul should be a separate state.⁴ Sir Percy Cox agreed on the idea of having a High Commissioner and, if required, a cabinet might be established, half of which were to be British officials and the other half Iraqi nationals. This was suggested on the understanding that the Cabinet would be an administrative body; otherwise an advisory body should be established consisting entirely of Iraqi nationals. If a figurehead was needed, Cox suggested the Naqib of Baghdad.⁵ Major Young, the Secretary of the Committee, wrote commenting on Wilson's proposals:

'He /Wilson/ was also undoubtedly right in pointing out from the first that it would be fatal to the future of Iraq to deprive her of the Mosul Vilayet ... What he /Wilson/ failed to realise was that matters had already gone too far for any British Administration however benevolent, to secure for long the willing acceptance of the people of Mesopotamia'.⁶

1. To avoid conflict of authority this body was created to co-ordinate the policies of the F.O. and India Office over Iraq. The India Government, the War Office and the Arab Bureau had representatives on this committee also.

2. Young, op. cit., p.280

3. F.O.371/4148/13298, Eastern Committee, 39th meeting, secret, 27th November, 1918

4. Ibid. In this meeting, Lord Curzon described McMahon's promises as 'embarrassing', and the Sykes-Picot commitments as 'a millstone round our necks'.

5. Ibid.

6. Young, op. cit., p.280

Curzon considered it 'presumptuous folly' for the Committee to decide the political future of Iraq without taking into account the views of the population.¹ Thus, the 'Inter-departmental Committee' at its meeting on the 27th November 1918 decided to authorize Wilson to hold the proposed plebiscite. The Secretary of State for India telegraphed to Wilson informing him of the decision.² A paragraph of the telegram made it quite clear that the 'Committee' was still unable to reach a definite conclusion apart from agreeing on the idea of the referendum. 'In the meantime our attention is being given to the question of the best form of Government to set up'.³

According to the telegram, the Political Commissioner was to put three specific questions to the people of Iraq:

1. Do they favour a single Arab state under British tutelage stretching from the Northern boundary of the Mosul Wilayat to the Persian Gulf?

2. In this event, do they consider that a titular Arab head should be placed over this new State?

3. In that case, whom would they prefer as head?⁴

One could be justified in seeing a great deal of unfairness in the way the questions were worded. First, the establishment of a single Arab State was directly linked to the existence of a 'British tutelage'; and secondly, that the Arab head, if he was wanted, would be nothing but 'titular'. To formulate the questions in such a way was an open hint to the Iraqis as to the desired results that the British Government would like to see.

Nevertheless, and within this framework, the British Government was still aware of the 'great importance to get a genuine expression of local opinion on these points, and one of such a kind that could be announced to the world as the unbiased pronouncement of the population of Mesopotamia'.⁵

It seems as if Wilson was not satisfied with the already existing restrictions. The Political Commissioner worsened the situation by ordering more

1. F.O.371/4148/13298 Eastern Committee, 39th meeting, 27th November 1918.

2. F.O.882/23/3133. Telegram from S. of S. for India to Political Baghdad dated 28th and received 30th November 1918.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

restrictions. On the same day he received the authorization, that is 30th November 1918, he gave the following instructions to the Political Officers:

'In connection with the first point, you should ascertain whether the inhabitants of your area wish to form a part of an Iraq state stretching from Raqqah on the Euphrates and Jazirat ibn 'Umar on Tigris to Basrah and the head waters of the Greater and Lower Zab. This question only arises in Kurdistan, Mosul Wilayet and Dairuz-Zor. But it is of greatest importance. Alternative is establishment of separate state, roughly Mosul Wilayet not under British Protection.

As regards second point the correspondence annexed to the memorandum sufficiently indicates the arguments for and against the possible alternatives.

As regards third point, answer is of course inseparable from the decision in point two. Here again the correspondence is sufficiently explicit as regards possible choices. Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the importance of avoiding the exacerbation of religious differences which might follow upon an indiscreet selection in this connection ...

As soon as you can conveniently after the receipt of this letter, you should discuss the questions raised therein confidentially with the principal personalities in your area, and ascertain from them what the trend of public opinion is likely to be, and inform me accordingly.

When public opinion appears likely, under the guidance of the persons you have consulted, to take a definitely satisfactory line, you are authorized to convene an assembly of all leading notables and shaikhs with a view to placing before them the above questions, informing them that their answers will be communicated to me for submission to Government. When public opinion appears likely to be sharply divided or in the unlikely event of its being unfavourable, you should defer holding a meeting and report to me for instructions.

In such cases, it may be anticipated that the favourable verdict of neighbouring districts will tend to have a favourable effect in forming public opinion.

When opinion is favourable, it is desirable that it should be reduced to writing and signed by as many as possible'.¹

These instructions left no space for any doubt that Wilson was planning quite deliberately to interfere with the results of the referendum so as to make them agree with his own expressed views. Such a conclusion could be fairly deduced from the implications of his instructions.

Firstly: he restricted the plebiscite to be held only among the 'leading notables and shaikhs'. This was not mentioned in the India Office telegram. In Wilson's telegram where he proposed for the first time the idea of a referendum, he suggested eliciting the opinions of the 'educated' people. The

1. F.O.882/13/3640, Memorandum 27190, Secret and Confidential, Civil Commissioner to Political Officers, Baghdad, 30th November 1918. Italics mine.

'educated' and the 'leading notables' in Iraq were not necessarily in the same category. In actual practice, the Civil Commissioner was denying the greater part of the population the chance of expressing their views on such a vital subject. The educated people of Iraq, at that time, consisted mainly of the ex-officials and ex-officers, who, according to Wilson's scheme, were excluded from showing their opinions. Among the tribal areas, the instructions recognized only the leading sheikhs, who did not in any way represent the bulk of the tribes especially in an era where tribal confederations were disintegrating and the social tide was promoting the small sheikhs and sirkāls. On the other hand, the 'leading sheiks'' verdict was quite predictable owing to the profound unity of interests with the British Administration who was subsidizing them financially and solidifying their position politically. One could notice here that the small merchant and the Effendi groups were out of Wilson's scheme while politically speaking their influence could not fairly be ignored.

Secondly: the Civil Commissioner made it quite clear that the referendum should take place only when the trend of public opinion was in a 'definitely satisfactory line'. The Political Officers were asked to contact the Civil Commissioner when public opinion 'is clearly divided or taking an unfavourable trend'. Such instructions were contrary to the India Office telegram which was seeking to get 'a genuine expression of local opinion'.

Thirdly: the Civil Commissioner sent his instructions to the Political Officers accompanied by his telegrams to the India Office in which he set forward his opinions and proposals concerning the future of Iraq, the proposed titular head and the necessity of an effective British control. Undoubtedly, these strongly worded and fully convinced telegrams were to be used for guidance and clues as to which trends were to be considered 'favourable'.

Fourthly: one could also be justified in criticizing the procedure of the plebiscite proposed by Wilson to his Political Officers in which they were to invite the 'principal personalities' of their areas to discuss the matter with them individually and 'confidentially'. If the trend of public opinion was 'definitely satisfactory', then, and only then, was an open meeting to be

held consisting of all the 'leading notables and shaikhs' to give their views, after being informed 'that their views would be communicated to the Civil Commissioner'. By using this tactic Wilson was playing on the worst aspects of the 'Oriental traditions'. Ahmed Pasha al Şāna', who declared bluntly: 'I don't want other Government than a purely British one',¹ had whispered a warning to the Political Officer of Basrah: 'Don't convene a meeting and put the questions to it. They might vote for you through fear, but they might possibly combine and say: "We don't want you; leave our country"'.² Another pro-British element stated to the Political Officer: 'You are very wise to ask each man separately and confidentially for his opinions'.³

In January 1919, Wilson sent to London the results of the Referendum together with his mentioned instructions. The reaction to his instructions as to the methods of conducting the Referendum was one of dismay and anger. Lord Curzon wrote that '... Wilson may have acted with the best intentions. But his intentions were not our orders'.⁴ Major Young wrote that such instructions had made it clear 'that public opinion is not to be encouraged, or even allowed to express itself in a sense contrary to Colonel Wilson's opinion'.⁵

II. The Plebiscite in Action

(a) The Favourable Replies: In Basrah, where the upper classes experienced improvement and prosperity as a result of British occupation which subsequently made these classes less favourable to the idea of Arab independence,⁶ and although the town was visited by the Civil Commissioner to consult its notables at the time of the plebiscite,⁷ yet, it seems that it was 'difficult to gauge opinions in Basrah'.⁸ The Political Officer of Basrah, apparently taking the advice of

1. F.O.882/23/5050, Self-Determination in Iraq, (Secret compilation of Declarations and telegrams), p.3.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. F.O.371/4178, dated 29th January 1919.

5. Ibid., dated 24th January, 1919

6. F.O.371/5231/E.13471. P. Cox telegram dated 26th October 1920.

7. F.O.882/23/3133, telegram No.11453, 22nd December 1918. From Political, Baghdad to S. of S. for India.

8. Ibid.

some pro-British elements, declined to hold a general meeting for the notables of the town; instead, he interviewed some of the leading personalities 'and recorded their individual personal views'.¹

The Political Officer of Basrah considered the views of the seventeen individuals whome he interviewed as representative of the whole of Basrah. However, in a telegram to the Civil Commissioner, he stated that the 'majority' of Basrah's Moslems were for an independent Iraq, but regard as out of the question the selection of an Amir from the family of the Sharif ... 'there being no family and no man in Iraq suitable and selection from without being distasteful'.² According to the Political Officer the Moslems of Basrah were mixed in their minds. Some favoured complete independence and considered the British as Kāfir; the others desired to see the continuance of the present civil British administration modified to suit peace conditions, 'natives of Iraq being employed to the fullest extent...'.³ The Political Officer, taking into account the views of other sects and races in Basrah, concluded:

'We have a demand for the continuance of British administration, liberal to national sentiments, under a British High Commissioner and without a native Amir, the Iraq State inclusive of the Mosul vilayet'.⁴

Although the Political Officer referred in his telegram to a group of 'Mohammedans', who demanded complete independence, unfortunately he failed to give any details concerning their political outlook and activities or their social weight amongst the Basrah community. Instead, he dismissed them as mere 'fanatics in religious sentiment or in the fear of just government which will put an end to the robbery and corruption which suited the genius of particular persons'.⁵ Of the seventeen individuals interviewed by the Political Officer, the only exception to the general trend was Sulīmān Faīdī, a young

1. F.O.882/23/3505. Self-Determination in Iraq, (Secret Compilation of Declarations and telegrams), pp. 2, 6. There were seventeen persons, thirteen of them were Moslem Arabs, one was a Kurd and the rest were a Jew, a Christian and an Armenian.

2. F.O.882/23/3505. Telegram from P.O. Basrah to C.C. Baghdad, No. 536, 21st December 1918.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

lawyer and a strong supporter of Sayid Tālib during the Turkish period. He wanted an independent Iraq under British guidance, favoured the idea of an Arab Amir and thought 'it would do to put in one of the Sharif's family'.¹

It is interesting to observe the social background and economic structure that had played a decisive role in formulating the political outlook of Basrah's citizens. 'Whereas the mercantile and landowning classes, generally speaking, wish for a fully equipped British administration, and no Amir, there is a section of educated Muhammadans who favour the eventual establishment of an Arab Government under an Amir'.²

In Qurnah a petition was signed by thirty tribal Sheikhs, head-men of villages and other notables. They declared, 'We wish to remain under the protection and care of this just nation /Britain/ and we accept as Governor-General in Iraq, Sir Percy Cox'.³ Seven of the signatories asked for the continuation of the Tribal Penal Code;⁴ fourteen of the 'Amārah Sheikhs signed a similar petition in which they asked for 'Englishmen speaking Arabic to be their Political Officers and Assistant Political Officers'; they wanted no 'Arab Officer', and asked for a Shara' judge from the Ja'fari sect, favoured the return of Sir Percy Cox, and asked for the continuation of the tribal Penal Code.⁵ Like Qurnah, but in clearer terms they requested that:

'... so long as a Sheikh is performing his duties to the Government faithfully, he should be allowed to live in his Mu'gata'ah and his district and no higher offers for our Mu'gata'ah from selfish men should be entertained, so that we may be able to do our best to restore the land to prosperity'.⁶

In Kut, two declarations were signed, expressing exactly the same content and differing only in words. Thus they included the following demands: a unified Iraq including Mosul; no need for an Arab Amir; and, British Administration

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1. F.O.882/23/3505. Summaries of opinion expressed by leading citizens of Basrah, p.6.
 2. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.1076, 26th January 1919. From Political Baghdad to S. of S. for India.
 3. Self Determination in Iraq, No.2, p.7.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid, No.3, p.8.
 6. Ibid.

should continue.¹ In 'Azīziyah, the situation was just the same, the Assistant Political Officer stated that 'the appointment of a son of the Sharif is strongly opposed everywhere'.²

The declaration of Nāsiriyaḥ was signed by 271 'tribal Sheikhs, Notables of the towns and other persons of importance'.³ They requested the return of Sir Percy Cox, coupled with the maintenance of British Administration. The idea of an Arab Amir was accepted as a desirable one, but not for the time being, and it was thought that such an Amir ought not to be an Iraqi, 'because the Iraqis are so much divided'.⁴ Mosul, the petition demanded, should be an integral part of Iraq.⁵

In the Samāwah district, four declarations were signed by 33, 14, 9 and 27 individuals respectively. All supported the continuation of the British Administration.⁶ In Rumaithah, centre of the armed uprising of 1920, the outcome was rather different, and the existence of a challenging opposition was strongly felt.⁷ This will be elaborated later in the chapter.

In Ḥillah, Hindiyaḥ, Musaiyb and Dīwāniyaḥ, five declarations were signed by 400, 20, 6 and 159 individuals respectively requesting the continuation of the British Administration.⁸ The first three petitions asked for the return of Sir Percy Cox, the Dīwāniyaḥ Muḍbaṭa, while considering the appointment of an Amir 'is in accord with common sense, with our religion, which enjoins us to appoint an Immam', yet it concluded that this 'is at present impossible'.⁹

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1. Ibid., No.4(a), p.9. The first declaration was signed by only one, the second by nine.
 2. Ibid., No.4(b), p.9.
 3. Ibid., No.5, p.11.
 4. Ibid. They gave the most astonishing reason for refusing to have an Amir, e.g. 'because we are the most faithless and hypocritical nation'.
 5. Ibid. The declaration, in eloquent wording, stated, 'Ever since our childhood, we have been hearing that the Iraq is composed of these three Vilayets - Baghdad, Basrah and Mosul ... Mosul is attached to Baghdad, as Baghdad is watered by Mosul, and Mosul gets good from Baghdad by the sea trade ...
 6. Ibid., No.6, p.12.
 7. Ibid., No.6, pp.12-13.
 8. Ibid., No.8, pp.17-18.
 9. Ibid.

The declaration of Khāniqīn, signed by 150 persons, was distinguished from the others by a long introduction devoted to show the shortcomings of the Turkish Administration in contrast with the profound achievements of the British. After expressing their gratitude, they ended the declaration with a strong call for the continuation of the prevailing order.¹ Mandali, through 12 signatures, expressed its desire for a unified Iraq under direct British control.² In Kifri, 'All' the tribal Sheikhs (Kurds and Arabs), with some representative of town notables, declared their wish for an Arab Amir; but, nevertheless, they requested that the British should postpone his appointment until such a time that they could have a definite opinion on the matter.³ Kirkuk Mudbata with its 17 signatures demanded a unified Iraq protected and assisted by the British.⁴

This was the stance of the individuals and areas who supported the British during the Plebiscite. By examining their declarations and economic or social structure, one could classify them into the following groups:

- (a) the religious minorities;⁵
- (b) the merchant and landowning classes;
- (c) most tribal Sheikhs;
- (d) those who would support anyone in power.

It was not surprising that the great section of the big merchants would support the British. On the one hand their trade was flowing to the British Empire, and on the other, it was carried and marketed by British trade companies. In addition to that, the security of the roads and the prevailing condition of 'law and order' were vital for their trade, and was reasonably achieved by the British authorities. The landowning class support to the British was inevitable. Being absentee landlords, the government was the only body able to collect, on their behalf, their revenues. As for the tribal Sheikhs, their attitude was two-

1. Ibid., No.10, p.20.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., No.11, p.21.

4. Ibid., No.12, p.21.

5. Their attitude will be discussed later in the chapter.

fold: their adherence to the British was linked to a series of measures produced by the British to strengthen their (the Sheikh's) power and prestige; the tribal Penal Code and the land possessions were on the top of the list. The Sheikhs' conflict with the absentee landlords was also on the agenda as the 'Amārah petition, in particular, clearly showed. Thus the Sheikhs' support was, in a way, conditional rather than absolute.

(b) The Attitude of the Minorities: One of the striking things which was revealed by the Plebiscite was the attitude of the religious and ethnic minorities. While among Moslem Arabs, defiance and opposition to the British administration were strongly felt in some areas, and overwhelmingly in others, as we are going to see later in the chapter, one cannot claim that it was so among the minorities.

The Political Officer of Basrah stated that the Jews and Christians, who represented about two fifths of the total inhabitants of the town, 'would have a British protectorate ... would view with alarm the creation of an autonomous Arab Government'.¹ Messrs. Mīr (a Jew) and Garibān (an Armenian) told the Political Officer that most of the rich Jews and Christians would leave the country if the British went.²

The class factor, in spite of its relevance, does not explain the whole question. By examining the position of the religious minorities in other areas, especially Mosul and Baghdad, one could deduce that the 'class' element did not stand as the sole factor in generating or formulating the religious minorities' stance. It was obvious that 'communalism' had played a decisive role.

In Mosul, several petitions of pro-British tune provide a clear evidence for the ideas mentioned above. The Chaldean Patriarch with thirty of the most 'prominent' members of his community (the Chaldean Catholic) signed a declaration requesting an assurance that they will 'remain under the shade of the British Empire'.³

1. F.O.882/23/3505. Telegram from P.O. Basrah to C.C. Baghdad, No.536, 21st December 1918.

2. Self-Determination in Iraq. Summaries of Opinions expressed by leading citizens of Basrah, p.45.

3. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.14(1), p.26.

Twelve 'representatives' of the Jewish community of Mosul signed a request to the British Government expressing gratitude and 'We pray you to receive us as subjects and to protect us constantly under your Government and your Justice'.¹ Twenty 'representatives' of the Armenian community of Mosul revealed a similar attitude² and so did a petition signed by the Jacobite Archbishop of Mosul and thirty men of his community with some 'representatives' of the Protestants.³ The Archbishop of the Syrian Catholics led twenty 'prominent' members of his community in signing a declaration requesting the protection of the British.⁴ This was followed by another petition with 150 signatures of Priests and Notables of the same community asking for their submission to the British Government and King George V and declaring bluntly that, 'no Arab Government should ever rule over us'.⁵ Two other statements came from Mosul. One was signed by seven Kurdish 'leaders', the other by fifty, including the whole of Yazidis.⁶ Both declarations were stating, in virtually the same words, their complete opposition to Arab rule.⁷

The clear rejection by the religious minorities of the idea of Arab rule was, taking the historical circumstances of that period into account, hardly surprising. Arab Administration meant for them not only a backward government, but also, and more alarmingly, an Islamic administration, in which, under its Shar'a regulation, they would inevitably be reduced to second class citizens. The independence movement and Arab nationalists in Iraq were in a formative period and unable to approach the Jews⁸ and the Christians politically to assure

1. Ibid., No.14(3), p.26.

2. Ibid., No.14(4), p.26.

3. Ibid., No.14(6), pp.26-27.

4. Ibid., No.14(7), p.27.

5. Ibid., No.14(10), p.27.

6. On Yazidis, see al-Hassani, al Yazidiya fi Hadirihim wa Madihim, (Baghdad, n.d.)

7. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.14(8 and 9), p.27.

8. It seems that the Jewish community of Baghdad was very influential due to its education and leadership in commerce.

Howard M. Sachar, The Emergence of the Middle East 1914-1924, (London, 1969). p.366; also Cmd.1061, op. cit., p.94.

It is interesting to observe that 'From the start, when the Balfour Declaration was issued, the reaction of the Jews of Baghdad to Zionism was tepid, not to say unfriendly'.

A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.305.

them on their future by providing a mature, responsible and perhaps secular(?) political programme. Far from that, nationalist aspirations in Iraq were very much linked to Islamic sentiments, which consequently made the demand for political independence more likely to cause considerable alarm among the minorities, more particularly when the new ruler, being non-Moslem, was the self-appointed protector of religious minorities.

The benevolent attitude of the Administration towards the Christian and Jewish communities of Iraq was a matter of an established policy.¹ For instance, between 1916 to 1918, some 282 persons were employed in the Administration of Baghdad, 132 of whom were Christians, 60 Jews and only 17 were Moslems.² In 1919, Rs.47,830 were grants allocated to Iraqi schools of various religious bodies. Christian schools earned 37,000, while Moslems received only 5,930.³ All this was done against a background of having, in 1919, 5,033 Moslem students, 330 Jewish and 855 Christian.⁴ Such a policy was bound to alienate the denominational communities from the independence movement and to link them more closely to the Administration. This factor throws a light on the Islamic inclination which dominated the Iraqi nationalists, and was, in its turn, to widen the gap between them and those communities.

The 'class' or economic factor had its influence also. The leading Jews and Christians of Iraqi towns were mainly merchants who had flourished under the British occupation. In showing their gratitude, they were merely echoing the same response shown by their Moslem counterparts. Furthermore we have noticed earlier that the Jewish and Christian merchants were trading mainly with Britain and Europe, and it goes without saying that to preserve the political links with England was an accurate reflection of their commercial interests. Another factor which might cast light on the minorities' political inclination was the European education of some of the younger members of these groups who were either sent to Europe or to Missionary schools. All these

1. F.O.371/3387, 'The Future of Mesopotamia'. Note by Sir Percy Cox, 22nd April 1918. See Appendix VI, pp.

2. Ibid.

3. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report, Dept. of Education 1919, p.8.

4. Ibid., Appendix 1.

factors had acted to generate a solid Jewish-Christian attitude hostile to the idea of Arab rule and favourable to the continuation of the British Administration. The independence movement had to exert stronger efforts and to produce a clearer political vision before it could win over the religious minorities to its cause.

(c) The Opposition: The Referendum procedure did not go very smoothly in spite of all the precautionary measures taken by the Civil Commissioner. The 'independence movement' used the event as an opportunity to solidify its ranks, develop several alignments, spread political agitation and to demonstrate, for the first time since the British occupation, its strong existence in a determined and striking way.

The first sign of opposition came from al Rumaithah district. Among the tribes of that area, 13 Sheikhs favoured the continuation of the British Administration, while 7 Sheikhs demanded the Sharif's son as a king. Among the notables of al Rumaithah, twenty chose the continuation of the British Administration, as opposed to eighteen who expressed their desire for an Arab king of the Sharif's family.¹

Because of the exceptional importance of Najaf, the Civil Commissioner visited it and presided over a meeting in which the Naqib of Najaf, representing divines, tribal Sheikhs and men of education were invited to discuss the question raised by the Plebiscite. The meeting, held on the 11th December 1918, was also attended by Major Newberry, the Political Officer of Shamiyah and Najaf. According to the British sources, 'the gathering was unanimously in favour of the continuance of British protection from Mosul to the Gulf without an Amir'.² Several sources sharply disputed the above account; they claimed that the meeting dispersed without reaching any definite conclusions and that the atmosphere was one of controversy and challenge rather than of approval.³

It seems that Sayid Hadi al Rufa'i, the Naqib of al Ashraf, declared in

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1. Self-Determination in Iraq., op. cit., No.6(5 and 6), pp.12-13.
 2. F.O.311/4150/5394. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, Memorandum No.S.24, dated Baghdad, 22nd February 1919. From A.T. Wilson to Under S. of S. for India.
 3. A. Basir, op. cit., pp.82-84; al Hassani, op. cit., pp.40- ; also al Fir'on, op. cit., pp.74-78

the meeting 'We want no one but the English'. This provoked Sheikh 'Abd al Wāhid Hāji Sikar, a politically-minded prominent Sheikh of al Fetlah, to denounce such a view and to state, 'We demand a National Arab Government'. Sheikh Muḥammad Riḍā al Shabībī, a man of education and an ardent nationalist, added:

'The Iraqi people conceive Mosul as an indispensable part of Iraq. The Iraqis think it is in their right to form an Independent National Government with complete independence. There is no one among us who would like to choose a foreign ruler /Britain?'.¹

Sayid 'Alwān al Yāsiri asked for the postponement of the meeting to enable the attendance to make up their minds. Wilson concluded the meeting by agreeing to that and asked them to send him their views through Major Newberry.²

After the gathering was over, some of those who had attended it went to Sayid Kādim Yazdi (the chief Shi'ah Mujtahid of his day) to consult his opinion. 'The matter is of an absolute gravity. Everyone, from the highest person to the lowest has the right to discuss the subject'. That was al Yazdi's reply. He asked them to assemble, discuss the question and inform him of their conclusion so that he would endorse it.³

The meeting advised by al Yazdi took place in the house of Sheikh Muḥammad Jewād al Jawāhir. Apparently, there was a great deal of discussion and confusion. 'Abd al Wāhid Sikar contemplated to end the confusion by delivering a short, but eloquent speech, in which he said:

'We are not yet mature for a republic. We are not Persians, Turks or British, so as to choose a ruler from those nations. But we are Arabs, thus our ruler should be an Arab. And since the Sharifian house is the highest in the Arab World, therefore we ought to demand an independent Arab Government, headed

1. Ja'far al Mahbuba, Maḍī al Najaf wa Haḍḥiruha, (Najaf, 1958), Vol.1, p.258.

2. Ibid. Among those attending this meeting were Sheikh 'Abd al Karīm al Jazāi'ri and Sheikh Muḥammad Jawād Ṣāhib al Jawāhir, both were prominent Shi'ah Mujtahids. Al Bāzirkān, al Waq'āi' al Haqīqiya fi al Thawra al 'Irāqiya, (Baghdad, 1954), pp.72-75. Others attending included: Sayid Muḥsin abu Tabikh, Sayid Nur al Yāsiri, Hādī Zuwaīn, Muḥammad al Abṭān, Hāji Muḥsin Shlāsh, Sayid Abās al Kilīdar, Sheikh Bāqir al Shabībī. al Fir'on, op. cit., p.74. Sayid Hādī Naqib al Ashraf was described by the P.O. as 'In reality a great supporter of government, but pitifully weak and vacillating and consequently useless when he is most needed. Not possessed of much intelligence'. C.O.961/1/Administration Reports of Shamiyah and Najaf, 1918, Appendix 11, p.108. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that, contrary to the Sunna, the Naqib of Shi'ah is of no great prestige, because he lacks religious authority which is confined to the Mujtahids.

3. al Hassani, op. cit., p.42

'by one of the Sharif's sons.'¹

This blunt speech gained the approval of the meeting and ended it.²

The leaders of the meeting went to Kufah to inform al Yazdi of their decision, and to gain his approval. The latter refrained from fulfilling his promises on the pretext that he is a pious man. He, al Yazdi claimed, knew nothing about politics and his knowledge was only confined to 'Hillāl and Harām'.³

The British did not fail to acknowledge their debt to al Yazdi, 'Nor will those among us who were participants in the drama', wrote Miss Bell, 'fail to remember the support which we, on our side, received from the Naqib /of Baghdad/ and Sayid Muhammad Kadhim Yazdi'.⁴ However, this support was, in fact, of a negative nature, 'In spite of much pressure, he refused to express himself unfavourably to foreign intervention in Iraq ... and has /al Yazdi/ even allowed it to be known that his sympathies are on the other side'.⁵ In spite of that, al Yazdi never came out openly in support of the British. Miss Bell, in an attempt to explain and justify his latter attitude, wrote:

'If he overstepped this mark his influence as a religious leader would suffer and the value to ourselves of his tacit support would diminish correspondingly'.⁶

This last statement and the whole incident is very revealing. In the first place, it shows clearly that the independence movement had acquired a strength to the extent of forcing the highest religious authority to refrain from publishing his own ideas and views. Furthermore, it exposes the weaknesses in the belief, held by some historians and certain circles among the British Administration of Iraq, that the Iraqi independence movement was nothing more than a religious response to the calls of the Shi'ah Mujtahids. It was in spite of al Yazdi's attitude that the independence movement carried on asserting its views in defiance of the British and al Yazdi.⁷

1. Sa'id Amin, al Thawra al 'Arabiya al Kubra, (Cairo, 1935), Vol.2, p.11; also, 'Abd al Shahid al Yāsiri, al Butula fi thawrat al 'Ashrin, (Najaf, 1966), pp.112-115.

2. Ibid.

3. Al Hassani, op. cit., p.42.

4. Memorandum, Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.7.

5. Ibid., p.3. Italics mine.

6. Ibid., p.3.

7. One should not commit the 'opposite' mistake of underestimating the influence of the Mujtahids. Had al Yazdi come to the support of the Opposition, the British would be in a very embarrassing situation indeed.

The leaders of Najaf and Shāmiyah continued their efforts to sign a petition expressing their wish for an independent Iraq. They held another meeting at the house of Sayid Nur al Yāsiri, a distinguished Sayid from Shāmiyah, to materialise their intentions. The meeting was broken up by the police and the participants had to take refuge amongst their own tribes. Two days later they were invited by the Political Officer of Kufah, who tried to persuade them to endorse a petition favourable to the Administration. They refused; and instead they signed a declaration demanding a unified Iraq with an Arab Government, headed by a son of the Sharif and restricted by a legislative assembly.¹

Nevertheless, the British did not accept a total defeat in such an important centre. The Political Officer contacted some 'moderate' elements, including al Yazdi and al Naqīb, encouraging them to submit 'favourable' petitions. Thus, the Political Officer was able to obtain fourteen declarations which were officially recognised. Nine of these petitions were each signed by one person only, and another was signed by three persons only. The following points emerge from a consideration of these petitions:²

- (a) all the Signatories were of a limited status, politically or religiously;
- (b) while the British were bitterly complaining about the 'Persian' Muftahids agitating against them³ one finds a large number of the people asked by the Political Officer to submit their views were either 'Persians' or Indian subjects of the British Government.
- (c) in spite of that, the results obtained were definitely not favourable to the British.⁴

The petition, which was signed by twenty-one persons, ignored the idea of British tutelage and demanded an Arab Amir who was not identified, but

1. al Fir'on, op. cit., pp.82-84; al Hassani, op. cit., pp.42-43.

2. Self-Determination in Iraq., op. cit., No.7(2-13), pp.15-16, the four remaining petitions; two of them were signed by twenty-one each and the other two by thirty-six and ten respectively.

3. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.3.

4. Five of the ten petitions evaded the questions at stake, claiming either ignorance or religious devotion. Those who supported the British were: Sayid Hāshim al Hindi, Maḥmud Agha Sheikh 'Alī, Sheikh Muḥammad Riḍā Kāshif al Ghata' and Sayid Ja'far Baḥr al 'Uluḥ Ṭabṭabā'i.

it was stated that he should be Muḥammadan.¹ The declaration signed by thirty-six notables, merchants and Mosque's servants was openly for the continuation of the British Administration and asked to postpone the appointment of an amir.² This was followed by a petition signed by al Naqīb and twenty-one merchants and notables of Najaf, which ran on the same lines as the preceeding one.³ On the 28th December, a declaration came from Shāmiyah, bearing ten signatures of sheikhs demanding an independent Iraq with an Arab Amir of the Sharif's family.⁴

In Karbalā', the British met their first total defeat. Major Tyler, the Political Officer, called some notables and merchants for a gathering at which he submitted the three questions of the Referendum, asking them for their views. Sayid 'Abd al Wahāb argued that the Committee did not adequately represent Karbalā', furthermore, ample time was needed to reach a responsible conclusion. Major Tyler agreed to postpone the meeting for another three days.⁵ Subsequent events proved that this decision was a major mistake on his part.

The supporters of independence rushed to al Shīrāzi, whose anti-British opinions were very well known to them, and asked him to express, in writing, his views concerning the question. Al Shīrāzi, a great Shi'i Mujtahid, and second only to al Yazdī, did not hesitate to issue a Fetwa in which it was stated:

'No Moslem is allowed to elect or choose a non-Moslem to rule over Moslems'.⁶

The outcome of this Fetwa was far reaching. In Karbalā', those who were supporting the British were reluctant to defy al Shīrāzi's religious order. Thus, not a single petition was signed in Karbalā' in support of the British, the only declaration issued in Karbalā' was in accord and harmony with the

1. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.7(10), p.14.

2. Ibid., No.7(9), p.15.

3. Ibid., No.7(10).

4. Ibid., No.7(14), p.16. In spite of the results being rather 'unsatisfactory', it was admitted by the P.O. that a direct and official pressure was exerted by the authorities to obtain the desired results. C.O.961/2/Administration Reports. Shamiyah, 1919, p.1.

5. A.R. Ḥassani, op. cit., p.34.

6. F.M. al Fir'on, op. cit., p.80. A Xeroxed copy of the Fetwa.

aims of the independence movement.¹ While the supporters of the British, according to Miss Bell, 'hesitated, in face of this pronouncement /the Fetwa/ to express their views in writing while verbally assuring the /A.P.O./ of their adherence to ourselves'.² However, the authorities, annoyed with the content of Karbalā' petition, refused to enrol it in the official publication of the results of the Referendum.³

On the other hand, al Shīrāzi's pronouncement did, undoubtedly, give a driving force to the nationalist cause in the whole of Iraq. The nationalists copied his Fetwa in tens and distributed it all over the country.⁴ The relations between al Shīrāzi and the nationalists went back to an earlier period, in fact his departure from Sāmārā' and settlement in Karbalā', was part of the al Shīrāzi-nationalist plan.⁵ But his new step had strengthened the nationalists by providing them with a religious backing and thus had enhanced the co-ordination between al Shīrāzi and the nationalists.

In the third Shi'i holy centre, Kāḍimāin, the British were to confront another serious challenge. Kāḍimāin was particularly influenced by two centres: firstly by Najaf and Karbalā', because it shared with them the Shi'i faith; and secondly by Baghdad because of its contiguity to it. Baghdad, at this time, was the arena of the nationalists activists. Taking also into account the attitude of the Mujtahids of Najaf and the Fetwa of al Shīrāzi, there can be no surprise at the hostile outcome of the Referendum in Kāḍimāin. But, what is striking was the behaviour of certain leading clerics. Sayid Ismā'īl al Ṣadr, one of the most influential Mujtahids in the Shi'i world, and his relative Sayid Ḥassan al Ṣadr, were among the very few Shi'ah 'Ulemā' who

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1. 'Abd al Razāq al Wahb, Tārikh Kerbelā', (Baghdad, 1935), p.51. Xeroxed copy of the petition. The petition after quoting the Anglo-French declaration went on to demand an Independent Iraq, with an Arab Government and stated that the signatories had chosen one, the Sharif's son, to be their king, restricted by an elected legislative assembly.
 2. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.3.
 3. C.O.691/2/Administration Reports. Shamiyah, 1919, p.30.
 4. A.R. al Ḥassani, op. cit., p.35.
 5. Sheikh Muḥammad al Khālīṣi, Baṭal al Islām, Biography of his father. (Kāḍimāin, 1939) (unpublished manuscript), p.114.

declined to endorse the Jāhād Fetwa against the British in the early days of the war. By the time of the Plebiscite a complete change occurred in their positions. They moved to the forefront of the opposition to the British Administration.¹ Such a change of attitude shows the ever mounting pressure of feelings hostile to the Administration. Furthermore, it brings to the surface the deteriorating relations between the Shi'ah Mujtahids and the British Authorities. The influential men who led the anti-British campaign in Kādimāin were Sayid Muḥammad Mahdi, the son of Ḥassan al Ṣadr, and Muḥammad ibn Mahdi al Khālīṣī.² The latter, through his political career did not try to hide his strong Islamic beliefs which made him opposed to British occupation and a supporter, although a Shi'i, of the Islamic State of the Ottomans.³

The hostile onslaught against the British was intensified to such a scale that 'the 'Ulemā' threatened with excommunication and exclusion from the Mosque anyone who voted for British control'.⁴ The product of such an atmosphere was a declaration signed by one hundred and forty three persons, in which they affirmed:

'... we, being the local Arab Iraqī nation, choose a new Arab Moslem Government to be ruled by a Muhammadan king, one of the sons of our Lord, the Sharif bound by local Majlis (assembly)'.⁵

The pro-British faction organised a counter-petition requesting the continuance of the British Administration, the return of Cox, and declaring the impracticability of an Arab Amir. The petition was signed by twenty-five persons.⁶ These included some notables, merchants, local sheikhs and British Indian subjects. The attempt was led by the head of the municipality who was also the principal merchant of the town.⁷

1. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.4.

2. Ibid.

3. al Imām al Sheikh Muḥammad al Khālīṣī, Kitāb fī Sabīl Allāh, undated memoirs (unpublished manuscripts), p.7.

4. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.1077, dated 25th January 1919. From Political Baghdad to S. of S. for India, London.

5. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.13(8), p.25.

6. Ibid., No.13(9), p.25.

7. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.1077. Cited above.

(d) The Referendum in Baghdad: The Civil Commissioner was aware that Baghdad was of vital importance to the Referendum, because of the following factors: being the capital, the centre of political activities, the largest populated town in Iraq, and the place of residence of the most influential men. Wilson was also aware of the strong nationalist tendencies among the Baghdadi influential men. So, he planned to have Baghdad as the last and final place in which to hold the Referendum, apparently on the assumption that the 'satisfactory' results coming from other parts of the country would positively influence the opinion of the Baghdadi notables.¹

The Civil Commissioner wrote to the Naqib of Baghdad, the Shi'i Qadi (Sheikh Shukr Allah), the grand Rabbi and to the heads of the Christian communities, asking them to nominate twenty-five Sunni, twenty-five Shi'i, twenty Jews and ten Christian delegates respectively.² This, on Wilson's part, seems to be a calculated step to obtain favourable results from Baghdad. Wilson was quite confident of Jewish and Christian support. The Shi'i Qadi owed his position to the British Administration; his post was previously unrecognised by the Turks.³ Wilson, being familiar with the Naqib's opinions, hoped that the Sunnah delegates being chosen by the Naqib would be up to his expectations.

The views of the Naqib deserve more attention, because of his strong influence and due to the fact that he was to become the first Prime Minister of Iraq:

'He /al Naqib/ is entirely opposed to an Arab Government ... considers that discussion of Arab independence is unworthy of attention ... wishes the inclusion of Mosul in the Mesopotamia Administration. He is of the opinion that a local man could never be head of the Iraq State, though after a long period of time an Arab might be appointed as such. He rejects the idea

1. Ibid. The C.C. stated in this telegram 'Each delegate /from Baghdad/ was provided with a statement showing the opinions elicited up to date from other parts of Mesopotamia'.

2. Ibid. Baghdad population in July 1917 was some 210,200, of whom 109,400 were Arab Moslems (Shi'ah and Sunna), 80,000 Jews and 12,000 Christians, 8,000 were Kurds and 800 Persians.
F.O.882/26/Arab Bureau Bulletin No.66, 21st October 1917.

3. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.4. Miss Bell described the Shi'i Qadi 'is a weak and colourless individual, whose self-effacing piety is his best recommendation'.

'of the appointment of a son of the Sharif now or in the future'.¹

The Naqib wanted to see a strong British Administration to rule Iraq, 'backed by an army of occupation of not under forty thousand'.² It is worth observing that 'in common with most, if not all, of the older notables of the town, he /al Naqib/ has a great fear of the revival of Arab Political Societies, run on the lines of the 'Union and Progress' organisation; the prospect of which is almost a nightmare to them'.³ Moreover, another attitude of al Naqib reflected a deep feeling, certainly shared by others, of political impotence and alienation:

'Khatun, /Madam/ your nation is great, wealthy and powerful: where is our power? If I say that I wish for the rule of the English and the English do not consent to rule us, how can I force them? And, if I wish for the rule of another and the English resolve to remain, how can I eject them? I recognise your victory. You are the governor and I am the governed. And when I am asked what is my opinion as to the continuance of British rule, I reply that I am the subject of the victor'.⁴

The Naqib, who did not approve the whole idea of the Referendum⁵ was consistent with himself by declining to act, although he agreed on his substitution by the Qādi of the Sunna, Hāji 'Ali Allusi.⁶ The Sunni Qādi, according to Miss Bell, was very much under the influence of two anti-British brothers.⁷ One was 'Abd al Wahāb al Nā'ib, Judge of the Peace Court under British Administration,⁸ and the other was Sheikh Sa'id Naqashbandi, the leader of the Baghdad branch of the underground, al 'Ahd (Covenant) Party.⁹ Apart from

1. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.11669, dated 29th December 1918. From Political Baghdad to Retanandum, London. These ideas were expressed in an interview with G. Bell.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., Appendix III, Annex I, p.338. Naqib's views were expressed in a second interview with Miss Bell, dated 6th February 1919.

5. Ibid., p.339.

6. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., pp.4-5. Miss Bell described the Sunni Qādi as 'an exceedingly devout Moslem, who has been on terms of intimacy and friendship with British Officials since the occupation. But his character is not sufficiently strong to resist an appeal to his religious sentiments.'

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p.5. al Nā'ib was described by Miss Bell, 'His duties as judge of the Peace Court, he has performed to universal satisfaction'.

9. Al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.151-152.

these two brothers, the anti-British agitation, among the Sunnah was led by men who, according to Miss Bell, were: 'Under 30, two of them /Ḥamdi Bājahji¹ and Sa'dun Shāwī² being members of good families. While the rest were of no position social or economic'.² As among the Baghdadi Shi'ah, it seems the most prominent figure in the anti-British movement was Sayid Ja'far abu al Timman. Although a small merchant, he enjoyed a considerable prestige among the Shi'ah, otherwise he would not have represented them in the Municipal and Educational Committees of Baghdad.³

However, the two Qādi, instead of selecting the representatives as they had been asked to do, called for meetings of their communities for the purpose of election. In both meetings, the nationalists had the upper hand and dominated the gatherings. The meetings were ended by the selection of twenty-five representatives for each sect on the condition that they should be bound by the will of the general meeting to demand an Arab Government, free from any European protection.⁴

The Sunni meeting was held at the Legal Court of Baghdad on the 17th January 1919. A petition was signed by the great majority, stating that they had mandated their Qādi to select their representatives on the clear understanding that those delegates were bound by the principles decided by the gathering. These principles were:

'First, Iraq from North of Mosul to the Persian Gulf is fully competent of ruling itself.

Second, the Iraqi call for a purely Arab Government.

Third, the greatest defender and Mujāhid for Arab dignity is the Sharif. Thus it should be one of his sons, and not anyone else, to be Amir of Iraq, bound by a national legislative assembly like all other civilised governments'.⁵

It seems that the decisions of the Conference did not meet the full approval of all who attended it. Musa Jalabi Bājahji left the meeting in a

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1. Hamdi Bājahji was at that time a Lecturer of Economics and International Relations at the Law College of Baghdad.
 2. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.5.
 3. Ibid.
 4. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.1077, op. cit.
 5. al Hassani, op. cit., p.39.

protesting manner. Seven out of the twenty-five Sunni delegates resigned and five new names were added to the Sunni list. In the Shi'ah conference, a similar decision was reached. The only one who refused to accept the majority decision was Hāji al Mullā Ridā.¹

Two points concerning the pro-British faction are noteworthy, namely their social composition and the political action which was supposed to express their views. Musa Jalabi Bājahji was 'head of one of the principal families and largest landowners of the town'.² He also, 'held high official positions under the Turks, but resigned after the Constitution. Hates and fears the C.U.P.'³ Four of those who resigned from the Sunni list because of their pro-British tendencies were of the Naqīb Zādah and Jamīl Zādah. These two families were 'in wealth and position the second to none in Baghdad',⁴ and 'very wealthy landowners'.⁵ The seven who withdrew from the Sunni list 'represent a very large proportion of the property owned by the fifty delegates'.⁶ The one Shi'i who withdrew his support, Hāji al Mullā Ridā, was also 'a well known landowner'.⁷ Two petitions were signed in Baghdad by some Sunnis to express support for the British Administration, and opposition to the nationalists. The first petition was signed by ten individuals, and the second by seven persons.⁸ Five of those signatories were working for the Administration itself, either in the Waqif or the Education Department, another five of them were amongst the biggest merchants in Baghdad, and three were very wealthy landowners.⁹

The other interesting phenomenon concerning the pro-British elements in Baghdad, was the methods in which they expressed (or did not express) their views. The Naqīb, in spite of his strong influence and profound beliefs, was

1. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.5.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., Appendix D., No.5, p.50.

4. Ibid., p.5.

5. Ibid., Appendix D., No.1, p.50.

6. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.1077, op. cit.

7. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.5.

8. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.13(1 and 3), p.23.

9. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., pp.49-50.

very reluctant to make such beliefs public. The two of al Naqib's relatives who withdrew from the Sunni list did not offer any explanation for their resignation. Mulla Ridā told the British Military Governor that 'he could not face the religious obloquy which would have resulted from open protest and that he had determined to drop out and offer no explanation'.¹ The Civil Commissioner telegraphed the India Office 'Most of them /the seven/ want British rule pure and simple: ... but were not prepared to face the religious obloquy involved in a public declaration of their wishes'.² It is interesting to find that some of those who signed the nationalist declaration were, in private, deeply against it. Some of them visited the Military Governor and explained their attitude as a result of political pressure.³ What is important here is the clear emergence of what seems to be an embryonic form of 'dual authority'. What we find is a group of people, fully supported by the military administration, yet unable to express its own ideas freely because of the effective political (perhaps religious) pressure of the opposition, while the opposition who did not control any of the machinery of the state was, nevertheless, able to suppress and intimidate any open support for the established authority.

After the preliminary meetings in which the delegates were chosen, a general gathering was held on the 22nd January 1919, and was attended by seventy seven persons representing the Moslems, Shi'ah, and Sunnah, the Jews and the Christians. The Moslem delegates agreed unanimously on the following petition:

'... We, being of the Musulman Arab nation and representing the Musulmans of the Shi'ah and Sunni communities inhabiting Baghdad and its suburbs, resolve that the Country extending from northern Mosul as far as the Persian Gulf become one Arab State, headed by a Muhammadan king, one of the sons of our Sharif Husain, bound by a local Legislative Council sitting at Baghdad, the Capital of Iraq'.⁴

This petition was signed by forty-seven persons, twenty-four of whom were Shi'i and twenty-three Sunnis. It is interesting to notice how radically they differed in their social class from that of the pro-British elements. Most of them were

1. Ibid., p.5.

2. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.1077, op. cit.

3. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit., p.5.

4. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.13(3), p.23.

small merchants, small landowners, teachers, ex-servicemen, artisans and some Mosque keepers.¹

The pro-British section signed two counter-petitions. The first carried the signatures of eight Sunnis, in which they demanded an Arab Government, but to be controlled by Sir Percy Cox. In harmony with their interests, they asked for 'complete liberty in internal and financial affairs'.² The other petition was signed by eleven, and asked for British rule, or alternatively to be considered as British subjects.³ While the nationalist declaration was signed by people directly elected by their communities and their declaration was publicly distributed, the signatories of the other petitions did not enjoy a representative character, neither were they able to openly publicize their views.,

The only defeat which the nationalists were to suffer in Baghdad was the one they faced at the hands of the minorities. Although the nationalists tried to approach and win them over, it seems these attempts were doomed to failure. 'Abdal Wahāb al Nā'ib contacted some Jewish and Christian delegates and tried to gain their support by assuring them on their representation in a 'proposed Council'. This, with a similar move by Hamdi al Bājahji, were futile and in fact raised more suspicions. 'It was clear to us that a complete scheme of Moslem Government had been thought out',⁴ so observed a Jewish delegate rather anguishedly. The Jewish and Christian delegates declined to affix their signatures to the petition drawn up by the Moslems and they decided to withdraw from the conference after it became clear that it was dominated by the nationalists.⁵ Instead, they presented three petitions. Eighteen Jews declared that an Amir for Mesopotamia was 'inadmissible', while a direct British rule was 'indispensable'.⁶ Three Christians, representing the Baghdadi Armenians, raised a petition in which they openly disclaimed any belonging to Iraq, and yet asked for a direct British rule in Iraq to 'conform with your Excellency's

1. See Appendix IV

2. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.13(1), p.23.

3. Ibid., No.13(3), p.23.

4. Ibid., No.13(3), p.23.

5. Ibid.

6. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.13(5), p.24.

wishes'.¹ Eight representatives of the Christian communities in Baghdad signed a petition preferring 'a British Governor-General with a British Government in direct relation with that of London'.²

III The Impacts of the Referendum

On the 27th December, 1918, Miss Bell wrote to her father:

'About Arab rule. In Mesopotamia, they want us and no one else ... they realise that an Arab Amir is impossible, because, though they like the idea in theory, in practice they could never agree as to the individual'.³

A fortnight later, she wrote again, pointing out the political situation created by the Referendum, 'We have been having rather a difficult time here'.⁴ This change from a confident attitude to one of serious worry was the best manifestation of what the Referendum had generated in the Iraqi political scene.

On the surface, the results of the Referendum were a confirmation of Wilson's expectations. After all, ten political divisions out of fourteen had asked for the continuation of the British Administration⁵ and some of these divisions supported the return of Cox. Some of the areas which expressed a desire for an Arab Amir had, at the same time, confessed that a British protection was necessary for the time being. On the Mosul question, nearly all divisions agreed that it should be part of the proposed state. In spite of this Miss Bell did not allow herself to be misled by such superficial indications. She rightly knew that the Referendum marked a turning point in the history of Iraq, and that it created a profound conflict between the Administration and an 'East who lost his head'. One could say in fairness that the Referendum had played an outstanding role in the political development of Iraq, and in many ways have paved the way for the armed uprising of 1920.

The lack of tolerance, of differences on the part of the Administration had deepened among the Iraqis a sense of powerlessness which took two forms:

1. Ibid., No.13(6), p.24.

2. Ibid., No.13(7), p.24.

3. Lady Bell, (ed.), The Letters of Gertrude Bell, Vol.II, (London, 1927), p.464.

4. Ibid., p.465

5. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., Basrah, Qurnah, 'Amārah, Kut, Nāṣiriyyah, Samāwah, Hillah, Kirkuk, Khānigīn and Mosul.

a subjective form; and an objective one. As for the first form, it was made clear by the kind of statements given by the Baghdadi Armenians '... to conform with your Excellency's /The Civil Commissioner/ wishes ...' ¹ or that of Sayid Muhammad Barakāt, a big merchant from Basrah: 'To my mind that you are government and should come to me, and ask me what kind of Government I want in Iraq denotes an extraordinary state of affairs, it is quite unheard of. What has the matter to do with me?' ²

As for the imposed alienation, the conduct of the Referendum cannot fail to give us a striking example of this form of deprivation from exercising political liberties. The representative declaration of Karbalā' was totally rejected by the Administration, and thus Karbalā' was deprived of any chance of expressing its ideas. ³ The opinions of the people of Ba'qubah town were absent from the official British publication of the results of the Referendum. But, in a secret telegram to London, Wilson stated:

'Townspeople of Ba'qubah town, who have been extensively canvassed from Baghdad, ask somewhat diffidently for titular Arab head to rule from Mosul to Basrah. Opinion is divided as to who should fill the post but a majority appear to favour the son of the Sharif'. ⁴

The declaration of the representatives of the Baghdadi Moslems was dismissed on the grounds that it was unrepresentative of the economically important families of Baghdad. ⁵ Out of 165,000 Arab Moslem inhabitants of Mosul, a petition signed by only twenty persons was considered as a representative attitude of all the Arab Moslems in the town. ⁶ Al 'Umari, an Iraqi historian who witnessed the events, said that such conduct raised the wrath of Mosul's population against the signatories and the Administration alike. According to al 'Umari,

1. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit., No.13(5), p.24.

2. Ibid., p.3.

3. Ibid., Karbalā' was absent from this official publication.

4. F.O.882/23/MES/19/7. Telegram No.1076, from Political Baghdad to S. of S. for India, London, 26th January 1919.

5. Memo. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, op. cit.

6. Self-Determination in Iraq, op. cit.

no one, apart from the twenty, was consulted; this made the people start thinking seriously of means and methods to do away with the occupying Administration.¹ No attempt was made to consult the Kurds, who represent one-fifth of Iraq's population, on their views regarding this vital subject. Furthermore, the whole of the Dulaīm District, including Faluja and Ramādi, was completely deprived from expressing its opinion. In Hillah, an uproar and discontent was aroused by the Political Officer's decision to assign only Sayid Muhammad al Qazwīni to gather signatures for a pro-British petition. Al Baṣīr, an able Iraqi historian and an eyewitness, said that a nationalist petition, signed by the head of the Municipality and several other important people was rejected by the Political Officer.²

The lack of tolerance and the absence of flexibility on the part of the Civil Commissioner must have led the advocates of independence, in the depths of their frustration, to think of different methods than the constitutional and passive ones to counter Wilson's policy.

The other important phenomenon which the Referendum had revealed was the existence of an embryonic form of 'dual authority'. If the British Administration was able, being the ruling body, to practice indirect and direct methods to influence the results of the Referendum and force people to express certain ideas, the independence movement, with its major components (the Shi'ah 'Ulemā' and the nationalists), was in its turn well able to practice counter-pressures to impose its own will on certain sections of the population. The fear felt by the pro-Administration sections in making their opinions known, made it reasonable to assume that the independence movement had commanded the minds and hearts of the Arab Moslems at least in certain areas, and thus made it quite difficult for its opponents to voice their genuine opinions. There was some other evidence to suggest that the methods used went beyond

1. Muhammad Tāhir, Tārīkh Muqidirrāt al 'Irāq al Siyāsiya, Vol.3, (Baghdad, 1925), pp.9-12.

2. Al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.69-70.

moral pressure, into threats of physical violence by nationalist underground organisations.¹ Anyhow, this situation (of dual authority) explains the refusal of Basrah's notables to publically express their pro-British opinions. It also explains the motives behind openly signing an anti-British declaration while discreetly apologising to the British Governor, as was the case with some Baghdadis.

The prestige and authority of the Shi'ah 'Ulemā' among their followers were by no means less than that of the official authority. Their Fetwas were of a decisive nature. The Alliance between the Shi'ah 'Ulemā' and the nationalists gave mutual strength for both, and helped them in forming a new centre of power or 'illegal' Government, seriously threatening the power of the prevailing authority.

Furthermore, the cleavage between the anti- and pro-British factions was of considerable depth. What made the conflict more alarming was the fact that it was not chaotic, but polarizing into two crystallized sections. A quick look at the declaration would reveal that most of the pro-independence declarations were almost identical in their demands and even their phraseology. Similarly, the pro-British declarations were also identical in their wishes and showed a strong resemblance. This apparent polarization, coupled with the absence of institutionalized methods of solving it, was an open invitation for a disruptive conflict.

Thus, the Referendum not only failed in reflecting the local opinion in its genuine form, but it also fed a "revolutionary" process, which led to the events of 1920. In brilliant anticipation Miss Bell, as early as the 22nd February, 1919, wrote:

... There can be no question that sooner or later a Nationalist Party with inflated ambitions, under men like Hamdi Pachahji, and Ja'afar abu Timman, must have sprung to life; as a result of recent proceedings, The Referendum it has come sooner to the birth'.²

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1. Majid Kana was tried and sentenced to death by a British Military Court because, it was claimed, he formed a 'terrorist' group, which threatened death to anyone who did co-operate with the British Authorities. He was hanged on the 25th September 1920.
al Iraq, Newspaper, No.100, dated 26th September 1920.
 2. Memo, Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, p.7.

PART FOUR
CHAPTER XII I

THE ORIGINS OF THE NATIONALIST-SHI'I-TRIBAL ALLIANCE
1919-1920

From 1914 up to late 1918, the Iraqi independence movement had undergone a period of political quiescence. Up to late 1918 it was argued that 'the great bulk of the people of Mesopotamia had been resigned to and content with British Administration' and that they 'had thought that only Allah could shift the British'.¹ However, in July 1920, Wilson wrote that certain conditions 'have created a state of restlessness in the public mind which words cannot dissipate'.²

My purpose in examining the Administration's policies, the taxation, the employment and the land issues, was to clarify the reasons behind the discontent of the Iraqi intelligentsia and peasantry. It was this resentment which provided the nationalists, who became the tension focus, with a wide social support. However the nationalists were, essentially, interested in the establishment of a national administration rather than in solving the peasants' grievances. The nationalists' failure in obtaining such an administration was the prime motive behind their persistent and successful attempt at a nationalist-Shi'i-tribal alliance. Thus it is logical to discuss the problem of the national administration before examining the growth of the nationalist movement and its alliances.

Prominent among the factors which nourished the 'state of restlessness in Iraq' was the unresolved conflict amongst British decision-makers concerning the political future of Iraq. This conflict caused great uncertainty and weakened the position of the Civil Commissioner. Its impact on the nationalists was profound. On the one hand they felt assured that they were acting well within the open promises of the British Government, and they received ample encouragement from the British Press and Parliament. On the other hand, they were losing patience with the Civil Commissioner's reluctance and delays.

1. B. Thomas, op. cit., pp.68-9

2. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52457, Vol.3, dated 5th July 1920

When General Maude entered Baghdad (March 1917), almost his first act was to issue a proclamation which fed rosy hopes of an impending Arab State. '... our Armies have not come ... as Conquerors .. but as Liberators ... the people ... shall flourish ... under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and their racial ideals...'.¹ At that time the Iraqi public were not aware that 'the British Cabinet, overriding the advice of its political officers on the spot /Cox, Wilson, Bell/, insisted on publication of a flowery piece of Syke's ebullience'.² However, Wilson had no intention whatsoever of implementing the Declaration.³

The armistice was to put the question of Iraq's political future into the forefront of interest. Thus on the occasion of the 'successful conclusions of hostilities against the Turkish Armies', the G.O.C.-in-Chief in Mesopotamia proclaimed measures which did not go beyond generalities of 'relaxation of restriction on personal freedom ... conveyance of corpses for burial at Karbala and Najaf ... release of some prisoners food to the poor ...'.⁴ The proclamation absolutely failed to touch on questions related to the political future of Iraq.

Moreover, a few days later, the Anglo-French Declaration was made public. Apart from its own importance, Elizabeth Monroe pointed to the significance of its timing: 'Of quite another kind is the promise given by a victor at the moment of its victory, for he should be in a position to keep his word'.⁵ This Declaration came as a complete contrast to the actual policies of the British in Iraq. 'We had promised self-governing institution, and not only made no step toward that but were busily setting up something entirely different'.⁶

I The Problem of an Arab Administration: This obvious contrast could be clarified once it is related to its real origin as a conflict between the British policy-makers and their 'man on the spot'. My purpose here is not to present a full

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1. Compilation of Proclamations, Notices, etc. Relating to Mesopotamia. October 31st 1914, to August 31st 1919 (Baghdad, 1919), dated 19th March 1917
 2. E. Monroe, Britain's ..., op. cit., pp.41-2
 3. A.T. Wilson, Mesopotamia, 1914-1917, Loyalties, (Oxford, 1930), p.240
 4. Compilation ..., op. cit., dated 2nd November 1918
 5. E. Monroe, Philby of Arabia, (London, 1973), p.96. (November 7th 1918)
 6. Lady Bell (ed)., op. cit., Vol.2, p.502, dated 10th October 1920

exposition of this conflict. The discussion will be confined to topics which had actually affected the independence movement.

It is clear that Wilson had bluntly refused to implement the policies decided by his own superiors. In 1920 Wilson wrote that since November 1918 the policies of the Foreign Office 'did not lead to anything but disaster'.¹ He believed that the 'considerable influence' of Young was being used 'almost entirely in a sense hostile to the existing Mesopotamian Administration'.² A few days before the rising, Wilson admitted that he 'cannot honestly continue to act much longer here as the representative of H.M.G.'.³

The conflict was centred round the question of the future Administration in Iraq. In March 1920, Wilson wrote to Hirtzel:

'I do not wish to appear to be leaving a sinking ship ... I am prepared to ... endeavour to devise something constructive to meet present exigencies, probably on the lines of Central Legislative Council with H.G. as President with native members in charge of Departments with British Secretaries'.⁴

Such a line was no longer acceptable, Hirtzel confirmed to Wilson 'As I have told you all along H.M.G. are irrevocably committed to an Arab Government and intends that it shall be a reality and not a sham'.⁵ Wilson, who did not agree, felt in a position to write back 'it has been maintained all along by Cox and himself that it is not within the power of H.M.G. to give early effect to their published intentions'.⁶ In March 1920, Churchill - referring to Iraq - made public the developed and important theory of the strategic use of the air force.⁷ Furthermore, Churchill pointed out that 'Other methods (rather than military) would have to be devised if we were to continue to keep Mesopotamia'.⁸ Instead of grasping the importance of the pronouncement, Wilson considered it as 'likely to have worst effect. It is bound to be used extensively for propaganda

1. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52455, Vol.1, to S. of S. for I.O. No.9180, 29th July 1920

2. Ibid., to P. Cox, 2nd January, 1920, Private letter

3. Ibid., to Montagu, 3rd June 1920, Private letter

4. Ibid., No.52456, Vol.2, to A. Hirtzel No. 3517A, 19th March 1920

5. Ibid., No.52455, Vol.1, 7th April 1920, Private letter

6. Ibid., No.52456, Vol.2, to Hirtzel, 10th April 1920, No.4386

7. The essence of this theory was to hold Mesopotamia through air rather than by military force. This concept was adopted by the Cairo Conference (March 1921). Air.5/829. pp.5, 37 and Appendix 13

8. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52455, Vol.1, copy deleted from Reuters, 26th March 1920

purpose'.¹

This encounter took its real dimension when Wilson wrote:

'... there is a tendency on occasions with the Home Government to interfere wholly unjustifiably in local matters ... I need hardly say that I have not accepted their orders, but we should not be put in that position'.²

In fact Wilson took the liberty of altering pronouncements which he was instructed by 'London' to announce. In this respect it is instructive to compare the actual announcement issued in Iraq on the 20th June with that authorised by the India Office in their telegram of the 7th June as modified by their telegram of the 18th June; the India Office Announcement originally read:

'/H.M.G.7 ... anticipate that the mandate will ... require them to formulate within a fixed period, which will probably not exceed two years, an organic law, to be framed in consultation with the native authorities ... /H.M.G.7, having regard to expressed wishes of the people of Mesopotamia for return of Sir P. Cox have decided to entrust to him ... to call into being (1) a predominantly Arab Council of State under an Arab President, and (2) a general Assembly representative of the peoples of Mesopotamia as a whole, and it will be his duty to prepare, in consultation with these provisional bodies, a permanent organic law'.³

The actual announcement published in Iraq avoided all mention of the underlined phrases. In a telegram dated 9th June 1920, the Civil Commissioner argued: 'We must be prepared, regardless of ^{the} League of Nations, to go very slowly with constitutional or democratic institutions'.⁴ Such a conviction clearly manifested itself in regard to the issue of the suggested Municipal and Divisonal Councils.

As a result of an Inter-Departmental Committee meeting which was held on the 17th April 1919, at which the Civil Commissioner was present, it was decided that he should be authorized to take steps towards the creation of five provinces for Iraq.

'The provisional formation of provincial Councils and the development councils were approved. These steps were regarded by the conference as necessary measures towards the development of a constitution in Mesopotamia. Formal authority was conveyed by an India Office telegram of the 9th May /1919'.⁵

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1. Ibid. to I.O. 27th March 1920
 2. Ibid. Private letter to Cox, 2nd January 1920. Italics mine
 3. F.O.371/5228. Foreign Office, 29th July 1920. Including the two announcements. Italics mine.
 4. F.O.371/5227. C.C. Baghdad to I.O. No.6948, dated 9th June 1920
 5. F.O. 371/5228/E.9020. A summary of correspondence in regard to the Political situation in Mesopotamia (by Major Young).

However, on the 29th October 1919, Wilson wrote that:

'... a Divisional Council at Basrah had been in full swing ... Provincial /Municipal/ Councils had not yet been formed nor did he contēplate moving in the matter that year'.¹

Furthermore it should be observed that the Divisional Councils which existed only in Basrah, 'Amārah, Kirkuk and Dīwāniyah² were aimed

'to secure the full benefit of co-operation by tribal leaders and large landowners in the administration of these territories ... They /the Councils/ will consist of not more than 12 members all of whom will, for the present, be nominated by the Divisional Political Officers'.³

Furthermore 'they will however at first be purely advisory'.⁴ It is not surprising that:

'The inception of those councils aroused but little interest among the masses, and the politically minded elite took no part in their deliberations. They did not like the system of nomination, though it was worked with complete impartiality'.⁵

However, a leader in the Basrah Times gave a different view: 'The Council could hardly be expected to take quite an impartial view of some of the subjects that have come under discussion ... as every member is a landlord'.⁶ Thus, in Wilson's own words, 'an Arab state though not on the lines desired by /H.M.G./ may yet come, but it will be by revolution and not by evolution'.⁷

As a result of the Armistice many of the politically exiled, the ex-officials and ex-officers had returned to Iraq. They had hoped for the fulfillment of British promises but Wilson's policies drove them into acute opposition to the Administration. The British intelligence asserted that 'There is little doubt that ex-Turkish officials are fanning the sparks of unrest and excitement and look forward to open demonstration if not actual open revolt in the near future'.⁸

1. Ibid. E.148636

2. Wilson admitted that 'no steps have been taken at Dair, Baghdad, Hillah, Najaf, Kut, Nasiriyah, Ramadi, Samarra, Bakubah, Khanikin ... nor do I contemplate moving in the matter this year'. F.O.371/4152/14836

3. A.T. Wilson, Clash...., op. cit., p.211

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. The Basrah Times, 10th January 1920

7. B.C. Busch, Britain, India and the Arabs 1914-1921, (London, 1971), p.412

8. F.O.371/5074. Mesopotamian Police, Abstracts of Intelligence, No.14, dated 3rd April 1920, Para.225

Percy Cox visited Iraq just before the outbreak of violence. He admitted that the situation was 'undoubtedly very difficult'. The immediate urgency was to keep it under control, to avert for the next three or four months any systematic outbreak and, at the same time, to take such action as would bring the moderates into the open on our side. 'This object', Cox argued, 'could only be achieved by giving some material for discussion and proof of our bona fides ... it might be necessary to allow a deputation to proceed to London in order to gain time'.¹

It was under such circumstances that the India Office had authorized the Civil Commissioner to announce the previously-mentioned proclamation. However, such a step was too late. Three days earlier Wilson had informed the India Office that he had learnt that the nationalists will 'propose in future negotiation with me to insist on the liberty of people to select Mandatory Power'.² In fact, and at an earlier date, Wilson made clear his conviction that there were no more bridges between his Administration and the Iraqi nationalists.³ The Iraqi nationalists had, since April 1920, rejected the Mandate.⁴ The Hijazi delegation to the Peace Conference submitted a memorandum which pointed out that the Mandates were allotted without taking into consideration the wishes of the population 'whose aspirations were proclaimed by the Damascus Congress'⁵ of March 1920.

Thus it is clear that the announcement even in its 'Indian' form was hardly acceptable to the Iraqi nationalists. In fact even the final form of the India Office was not considered acceptable by members of the Foreign Office:

'The only fresh points in the announcement authorized by the India Office are:

- (1) the reference to the Organic Law which really adds nothing,
- (2) the description of the Council of State as predominantly Arab...'⁶

Sir A.J. Tilley agreed with Young's remarks and added that 'Cox while at Baghdad might let it be known that we should not be at all averse for a sharifian Emir'.⁷

1. F.O. 371/5227/E.7253. 'Summary of Correspondence regarding political situation in Mesopotamia'.

2. Ibid., E.6800, From C.C. Baghdad, No.7199, dated 15th June 1920

3. F.O.371/5227/E.6060. From C.C. Baghdad No.6584, dated 3rd June 1920

4. Infra.

5. F.O.371/5035. From Vansittart, Paris, Dated 3rd May 1920

6. F.O.371/5227/E.6509, dated 16th June 1920

7. Ibid.

Furthermore, Wilson, Simultaneously, issued another announcement in which he asserted that there will be no withdrawal of British troops, and that in case of necessity, he would not hesitate to call upon the military authorities to give full support to the Sovereign Power.¹ In his second declaration, Wilson did not even consult his higher Authorities.² It goes without saying that such 'non-conciliatory' announcements were neither able to gain a positive response from the nationalists nor capable of encouraging the moderates to 'come to the open' and confront the nationalists' 'reign of terror'.

The Civil Commissioner explained to the India Office the purpose behind his suggested omissions:

'To refer questions afresh to divisional councils and to 'local opinion' can have but one result. The extremists who ... are demanding absolute independence ... will by threats and by appeals ... win over moderate men who have hitherto looked to H.M.G. for a scheme offering a reasonable chance of success and which they can support'.³

Major Young commented:

'These /extremists/ appeals will be all the more difficult to resist if the extremists can point to the fact that H.M.G. have imposed upon the country a constitution which is predominantly British. I am convinced that the constitution should be purely Arab'.⁴

Nevertheless Wilson published the Announcement 'the way he liked it',

Major Young wrote:

'I have little doubt that it is the words "predominantly Arab" to which Colonel Wilson objects. He would prefer a British majority on the Council of State'.⁵

The second suggestion of Cox was to allow an Iraqi delegation to proceed to England. Had the right delegation been allowed, it might have eased the very tense confrontation which was snowballing. Suwaïdi and al Sadr were hoping to 'go to London, there they proposed to lay their case to H.M.G.'.⁶ Such an idea came from Yusif's son Nāji who in early 1920 wrote to his father (the letter was

1. al 'Iraq, No.17, 21st June 1920

2. F.O. 371/5227/E.7459

3. F.O.371/5226/E.4789. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. No.5559, dated 8th May 1920

4. Ibid.

5. F.O.371/5227/E.6509, dated 16th June 1920

6. F.O.371/6349/2172. Mesopotamia Intelligence Report, No.3, dated 15th December 1920

intercepted by the British) suggesting the formation of a delegation to proceed to London.¹

Nevertheless such an attempt did not materialize. In an inter-departmental meeting, Hirtzel asserted that 'Wilson strongly objected to the idea of further consultations with the people of the country'.² In another meeting, Lord Curzon revealed Wilson's suggestion of 'a deputation of eight persons who' Curzon indicatively pointed out 'would no doubt be carefully selected by himself'. Curzon went on to say that 'In an earlier telegram, No.6791 of the 7th June, He Wilson suggested that no good purpose would be served by his seeing the extremists'. Curzon disclosed that these telegrams left him with an 'unpleasant impression' of Wilson's incapacity to deal with the situation.³ Young elaborated more on the issue and the factors behind the Foreign Office refusal of the Iraqi delegation

'My objection to this proposal is that no deputation from Mesopotamia nominated by Colonel Wilson would really represent the views of the exiled Baghdadis who are the root cause of all the trouble ... The prime movers are the twenty-nine Mesopotamians who met at Damascus to proclaim Abdullah king of Mesopotamia. It would in my opinion be very much better that these men should be invited to Baghdad to state their case to Sir Percy Cox, than a picked deputation selected by Wilson should proceed to England to repeat the views expressed in the course of the self-determination enquiry of last year'.⁴

This time Mr. Montagu was to admit that he had never held the view that Wilson 'with his marked inclination to concentrate power in his own hands could fairly be asked to carry out the policy of H.M.G.'.⁵ Nevertheless Montagu pointed out that the 'possible effect of refusing to allow Wilson to send his proposed deputation must not be lost sight of'. He would even include 'those Baghdadis who were not present in Mesopotamia'.⁶ Curzon argued:

'Mr. Montagu had ... mentioned the case of Zaghlul, but was there any reason to suppose that this was the kind of man Colonel Wilson would send? We wanted the local Zaghlul, not a picked deputation of obedient admirers'.⁷

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1. Nāji suggested the following Iraqis who were living in Syria to accompany the delegation: Nuri al Sa'id, Taha al Hāshimi, Rashid al Khoja, 'Ali Jawdat, Fahmi al Mudarris, Jamil Madfa'i, Ra'ouf al Jibaji, Tahsin 'Ali, Ra'ouf al Kubaisi and Shākir al Shaikhly. F.O.371/5082.
 2. F.O.371/5225/4811. Minutes of I.D.C.E., 26th May 1920
 3. Ibid., Minutes of I.D.C.E., 27th June 1920, p.3
 4. F.O.371/5227/E.6509 dated 16th June 1920
 5. F.O.371/5226/4811. Minutes of I.D.C.E., 27th June 1920
 6. Ibid., p.4
 7. Ibid., pp.5-6

The two trends amongst British policymakers were motivated by different interests and different outlooks.¹ It was extremely difficult to reconcile the practical policies necessitated by one trend or the other. The unwise delay in fully adopting one line or the other was largely responsible for the outbreak of violence.² Among other things, it was in March 1920 that Wilson anticipated 'trouble' on the Euphrates during the summer. He informed his superiors that Shāmiyah and Najaf were 'selected by the Syrian Party /sic/ as the most promising ground for their propaganda'.³ In June, Bell⁴ and Cox⁵ confirmed the seriousness of the situation.

To counteract such circumstances, only two alternatives were open: conciliatory measures towards the nationalists, or the utilization of force. The first line was rejected by Wilson, 'We cannot maintain our position as mandatory by a policy of conciliation of extremists'.⁶ The second line was refused by 'London' who considered that 'We could not hold /Mesopotamia/ by spending 15 to 29 millions a year on it',⁷ and was of the opinion that 'The whole bent of Wilson's mind was wrong and /Wilson's/ presence at the head of Administration ... was not practicable'.⁸ Thus an impossible situation was established; a 'non-conciliatory' Civil Commissioner was allowed to continue his policy of provoking the nationalists without being allowed the means and methods of protecting his policy. On the other hand, a 'conciliatory' British Government was incapable of displaying its moderation, because its 'man on the spot' refused to carry out its 'conciliatory policies'.

Some writers, who had administrative experience in Iraq, attributed the rise of the independence movement to the conciliatory pronouncement uttered by the allies.⁹ This represents only part of the truth. It should be remembered that

1. See Chapters VIII and XV

2. Wilson wrote to his mother 'H.M.G./ find it convenient to pretend that what has happened is not due to any fault of theirs but to me'. A.T. Wilson, Letters, in London Library, vol.2, 1903-1921, dated 6.9.20

3. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52455, Vol.1, to I.O. 31st March 1920

4. Lady Bell (ed), op. cit., Vol.2, p.489, June 14th 1920

5. F.O.371/5227/E.7253. From C.C. Baghdad, No.7693, 22nd June 1920

6. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52457, Vol.3, to S.S. I.O. No.6948, 9th June 1920

7. Ibid., Vol.1, Churchill speech, 26th March 1920

8. F.O.371/5226/4811. Minutes of I.D.C.E. 27th June 1920 (Lord Curzon)

9. B. Thomas, op. cit., pp.68-9; J. Mann, op. cit., p.292

Iraqi nationalists had as early as 1912-1914 demanded the 'Arabization' of the Administration.¹ In fact, it was in February 1913 that Tālib of Basrah had concluded an agreement with the Turks to that effect.² However the Baghdadi nationalists viewed even such an accord with dismay.³ The actual British policy in Iraq (during Wilson's era) was in fact a negative turnabout. This enraged the nationalists: 'Did we fight to get rid of the Turks ... only to replace them by the British?'⁴ and urged the intelligentsia, en mass, to a vigorous support of the cause of independence.

The Syrian model of an independent Arab Government with its promises and obvious contrast to the Iraqi conditions was another factor behind the restless politics of Iraqi nationalists.⁵ The progress of the national movement in Turkey and the victories of Mustafa Kemal were 'being closely watched' by the Iraqis.⁶ The Irish disturbances did not lack their impact. The Egyptian rising of 1919 contributed to the cultivation of anti-British feelings and enhanced nationalists' aspirations.⁷

The impact of the Russian Revolution on the Iraqi movement is worth a short examination. Iraqi events of 1920 were supposed to have been largely influenced by the Bolsheviks; in July 1920, the Civil Commissioner was of the opinion that Mirza Muḥammad Riḍā (son of the Chief Mujtahid, al Shīrāzi) was 'working for the Bolshevik cause in Karbala'.⁸ In mid November, the High Commissioner reported the presence in Baghdad of two Bolshevik agents, one of whom was an 'ex-Commissar in Moscow'.⁹ In late November the British Intelligence reported the existence

1. See Chapter III

2. S. Faḍī, op. cit., pp.131-2

3. M. al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.46-7

4. Z. Zeine, The Struggle for Arab Independence, (Beirut, 1960), p.146

5. F.O.371/5227/E.6060. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. 3rd June 1920, No.6584; A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., pp.212, 251

6. Ibid., p.212

7. M.T. al 'Umari, Tārīkh ..., op. cit., Vol.3, p.99

8. F.O.371/5078. Baghdad Memo No.20760, 14th July 1920, covering Report by A.P.O. Karbala on Activities of Anti-Government Party and precis of evidence against each deportee.

9. F.O.371/5292/E.14660. From H.C. Baghdad, 16th November 1920, No.13946, Very secret, no distribution.

of an underground group called Haqq (Right) which had 'already received a letter from the Bolshevik Government' promising assistance.¹ On the 15th December, the British Intelligence 'received information that Mirza Muhammad Ridha ... has been ... advocating an understanding with the Bolsheviks'.² It was also reported that 'four Bolshevik agents' have 'undoubtedly passed /carrying/ recommendations to Shaikh al Shariah /al Isfāhani/'.³ In January 1921 the Intelligence reported that in Baku an army of one thousand Arabs was formed.⁴ This irrational estimation of 'Bolshevik peril' reached its climax when the War Office concluded that the Iraqi insurrection was but part of 'the malign influence of Moscow'.⁵ According to Baghdad Police 'Intelligence' Muhammad al Sadr was a Bolshevik!⁶

Some contemporary Arab writers also tend to attribute an overdue influence to the Soviet system on the Iraqi events of 1920.⁷ Amīl Tuma went to the extent of suggesting that the national government of Iraq was one of the outcomes of the October (Bolshevik) Revolution.⁸

However, there is no evidence to support such claimed interaction or direct influence. In fact, it seems that the Bolsheviks had considered 'Mesopotamia' as an 'exceptionally backward area'. Apart from a short declaration to the 'Peasants of Mesopotamia',⁹ which most probably did not reach Iraq, there are no indications of any direct impact.

Furthermore, the Iraqi nationalists' attitude towards Bolshevism reveals the limited relations between the two movements. Al Furāt, the mouthpiece of

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1. F.O.371/6349/2172. Intelligence Report No.2, 30th November, 1920, p.4
 2. Ibid., Intelligence Report, No.3, 15th December 1920, p.7
 3. Ibid.
 4. F.O.371/6350/3824. Mesopotamia Intelligence Report, No.6, 31st January 1921.
 5. W.O.33/969. General Staff, W.O., Cause of the Outbreak in Mesopotamia, October 1920
 6. F.O.371/5081. Baghdad Police Reports, Prepared by the I.O. 2nd November 1920. Information dated 20 and 27th March 1920, pp.86, 95, 207.
 7. For instance, see 'A.M. al Nuri, Thawrat al 'Irāq al Waṭaniya; Al Thaḳāfa al Jadīda, Baghdad No.14, June 1970, pp.30-1. Also S. Khayri, Al Thawra al 'Irāqiya al Awla, Al Thaḳāfa al Jadida, No.38, July 1972, pp.77-9
 8. A. Tuma, Al Waḥda al 'Arabiya fi Taṭawriha al Tārīkhi, (Haifa, 1970), p.12 Originally a Ph.D. thesis to Moscow University.
 9. Demetrio Boersner, The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question 1917-1928, (Geneve-Paris, 1957), pp.98, 129

the Rising, clearly distinguished between the aims of the two movements (one is social and international; the other is political and national). In this regard al Furāt identified the Iraq movement with its 'sisters', the Egyptian and Irish 'revolutions'.¹ After the fall of Enzeli, al Furāt predicted a Russian advance into Iraq and urged the nationalists to consider a final decision on which side 'should the Iraqis fight'.² In the same issue the paper did not hide its suspicions as to the Bolsheviks' intentions.³

II The Formation of New Political Parties

The discussion in this Chapter will be confined to Baghdad. Basrah had ceased to play an effective 'nationalist' role. Political activities in Mosul were discussed earlier. However a short evaluation of its political conditions is useful.

In late 1919, the Political Officer pointed to a 'disturbed' situation in Mosul of which he referred to external 'influences'.⁴ He asserted that the non-Moslems were not sympathetic towards the nationalists.⁵ Such a view was voiced by the Civil Commissioner a year earlier.⁶ Even in late 1920 it was reported that the news of an impending Arab Government had 'produced something very like a panic' amongst religious minorities.⁷

'As regards the Muhammadans', the Political Officer wrote in late 1919:

'The city magnates, landowners and intellectuals ... did not as a rule feel the hardships of Turkish Administration ... Sharifian propaganda found considerable adherence on the part of those who ... might well hope that the Government posts now held by foreigners would under an Arab Government fall to their share ... leaning towards Turkey is to be expected'.⁸

However, such leanings were short-lived because of the fact, previously mentioned, that Mustafa Kemal himself had no Arabian ambitions: 'his objection is not to Arab independence but to Britain running Iraq'.⁹

1. al Furāt, No.2, 28th Dhee al Qu'da, 1338 (August 1920)

2. Ibid., No.3, 5th Dhee al Huja 1338 (1920)

3. Ibid., No.2

4. E.g. President Wilson's pronouncement, the delay of peace treaty with Turkey, the Arab State of Syria.

5. C.O.696/2. Admin. Report, Mosul 1919, p.7

6. F.O.371/4147/146. Political Baghdad to I.O., 26th December 1918, No.11569

7. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report Mosul, 1920, p.25

8. C.O.696/2. Admin Report Mosul, 1919, p.7

9. F.O.371/6353/71. From H.C. Iraq to S.S. for the Colonies, No. 534

In late 1920, the Political Officer of Mosul wrote:

'Of the Arabs themselves, the tribes are probably in favour of /an Arab Government/ as likely to conduce to Government weakness ... The agriculturālists are probably against it for exactly the same reason. The attitude of the small town population ... the idea that the Arabs are perfectly capable of managing their own affairs without any assistance or supervision from anyone, is not nearly so strong as it was'.¹

In spite of the underground character of the nationalist movement in Mosul, the British Administration were able to report the following information:

'Amin al Umari: Employed by us in 1919, he resigned and went to Syria ... Appeared as liaison officer between the Kemalists and Sharifian force which attacked Tall 'Afar ... of the Ahd Group ...

Aziz Arab: a young merchant, long suspected of being an active member of al Ahd ... arrested for trial for sedition.

Aziz Ismail al Umari: Young teacher. Reported as using his lessons for propaganda, of being a channel for the Ahd communications with Baghdad and of being specially detailed to discover who are our special service agents.

Dr. Daud Chalabi: An educated doctor. Believed to be head of the Ahd committee in Mosul ...

Hamdi Chilmaran: Young merchant. Member of al Ahd. Imprisoned a short time in May 1920 ...

Mulla Muhammad Arab: Imam of Nabi Jarjis Mosque ... Believed to be extremely fanatical and intensely anti-British. Took a prominent part in the August maulud of 1920.²

Mustafa b. Haji Hussin Agha: /A Young Lawyer/, member of Ahd; in Baghdad became a member of the Haras and is the local head of that society in Mosul.

Mustafa Ahmed al Umari: /Student of Law/ at Baghdad. Extreme nationalist ... was a member of the sub-committee of the 40 Mandubs.³ ... the Baghdad correspondent of the Ahd.

Sa'id b. Haji Thabit: Merchant in his /35th/. Undoubtedly a prominent member of the Ahd. Escaped from arrest to Mardin ...'.⁴

It was in late 1918 that an administrative committee leading al 'Ahd was organized in Baghdad. It was composed of Sheikh Sa'id Naqshabandi (Mu'tamad, President), his brother, 'Alā' al Nā'ib, his cousin Bahā' Naqshabandi, Nuri Fetāḥ (ex-officer and responsible for communication with the 'General Centre' in Damascus) Hassan Ridā (lawyer), Amīn Zaki (ex-officer), Sāmi and Anwar Naqshali (brothers and ex-officers) and 'Izat al A'dami (writer). The Baghdad branch started to produce its magazine al Lisān (The Tongue), while the centre in Damascus issued its al 'Auqāb.⁵

1. C.O.696/3. Admin Report, Mosul, 1920, p.26

2. Infra pp. 362-3, 369-70.

3. Infra pp. 364-5, 374, 384.

4. F.O.371/6349/171 'Personalities in Mosul'

5. Al Hassani, op. cit., p.56

In contrast to its wings in Syria and Mosul, the Baghdadi branch of al 'Ahd could not emerge as a polarizing centre of political activities. In late 1919 and thereafter Iraqi nationalists founded a different party (Ḥaras al-Istiqāl) to represent their aims and organize their efforts.

This fact is not widely known and no attempt has been made to explain it. In this respect it is useful to remember the previously mentioned amendment in the 'Ahd constitution which established Britain as the sole source of assistance. Such a line was not welcomed by the nationalist groups inside Iraq. The inside movement was more hostile to the British and less aware of the 'anti-Wilson' and 'liberal' tendencies interacting within the British policy-makers. It is most likely that the attachment of the Baghdadi branch to its 'Syrian' centre had deprived it of the necessary political initiative and flexibility. The overwhelming military (and Sunni) character of 'Ahd might be another factor in explaining its weakness amongst civilians (and Shi'ah).

A more thorough pursuit of the political and intellectual history of Sa'īd Naqshabandi (leader of Baghdad 'Ahd) was helpful in comprehending his political failure. His sectarian and conservative views were a serious barrier for him to assume the nationalists' leadership. When the older Shīrāzi was playing his 'progressive' role of supporting the constitutional movement and combatting the tobacco concession, Naqshabandi, after gaining the Wali's permission, left for Sāmarrā' in 1893 to combat the rising popularity of Shīrāzi. He opened a religious school there where its main purpose was to 'preserve the Sunni faith and character of Sāmarrā'. The sectarian conflict exploded in Sāmarrā' and endangered the whole of Iraq and might have brought foreign intervention save for the wisdom exercised by al Shīrāzi.¹

In 1910, an Iraqi magazine, Tanwīr al Ifkār, reproduced an article by al Zahāwi advocating certain rights for women. A formidable outcry of protest was initiated by the Sunni 'Ulemā' which resulted in the dismissal of al Zahāwi from his post in the Law College. Zahāwi had to escape from Baghdad to save his life from the fanatical mob.² During this occasion Naqshabandi revealed more of his

1. A.B. al Tahrāni, al Mujadid al Shīrāzi, (Najaf, n.d.), pp.19-23; Y. al Sāmarrā'i, Tārīkh 'Ulemā' Sāmarrā', (Baghdad, 1966), pp.21-4; Y. Sāmarrā'i, Tārīkh Madenet Sāmarrā', Vol.2, (Baghdad, 1971), pp.177-8

2. 'A.R. al Hilāli, al Zahāwi ..., op. cit., p.43

ultra-conservative inclinations; he published his pamphlet, al Sayf al Bāriq fi 'Unuq al Māriq.¹

Naqshabandi was also a leading member of the Iraqi 'conservative' group al Mashwara, which was formed to oppose the C.U.P. in Iraq.² It is useful to remember that most of the Iraqi nationalists were, during the period of 1908-1912, ardent supporters of the constitutionalist and reformist claims of the C.U.P. They turned against the C.U.P. only when it disclosed its Turkish prejudices and tyrannical methods.

Thus in February 1919, a new group was formed and it was called Haras al Istiqlāl (Guards of Independence). Those who took the initiative in the formation of this group were young nationalists in their twenties: Shākir Maḥmūd, Maḥmūd Rāmiz, 'Aref Hikmet (ex-Officers), 'Ali Effendi Bāzirkān (teacher), Jalāl Bābān (Lawyer) and Bāqir al Shabībī (writer).³ Once this party was formed, its 'militant' character was to attract the support of larger groups. Soon afterwards it was joined by Nāji Shawket, Dr. Sāmi Shawket, Ḥamdī Bājahjī (all were active members in the early al 'Ahd); Ja'fer abu al Timman, Bahjat Zaynal (small merchants) 'Abd al Ghafour al Badri (ex-officer and editor of al Istiqlāl) and 'Abd al Majīd Kanah (popular leader).⁴

The despair of some young Iraqis over the moderation of the Baghdadi 'Ahd had urged them to form an underground society called Jam'īat al Shabība al Waṭaniya (The Society of the Patriotic Youth). They were Ja'far Ḥamandī, Sādiq Ḥabāh, Sāmi Khundah, Sādiq al Shihrabāni, 'Abbas Mahdī, Qāssim al 'Alawī and Sa'd Ṣāliḥ.⁵ They were a mixture of young Sunni and Shi'i graduates. Their 'extremism' was revealed in the British Intelligence Report:

1. The exact translation is: 'The Blunt Sword on the neck of the Renegade'.

2. Leading members of that group were: 'Abd al Raḥman al Naqīb, 'Isa Effendi al Jamīl, 'Abd al Raḥman Pasha al Ḥaydrī, Muḥammad Fāqīl al Dāghistāni, Mula Najm al Wā'q, Muṣṭafa al Shihribāni. All were Sunni, wealthy and conservatives. Dr. 'A. al Wardi, Aspects ..., op. cit., Vol.3, p.164

3. al Baṣīr, op. cit., p.137

4. al Ḥasani, op. cit., p.57

5. Ibid., p.58

'Arif Hikmat Chapan told an agent that there was a secret society (apparently a branch of al Shabibat al Wataniyah) which has branches in Basrah, Baghdad and Mosul and other of the larger towns, the object of which was to get rid of persons supposed to be hostile to their aims /Istiqlal and Arab unity/.¹

The emergence of al Haras with its militant platform and remarkably non-sectarian structure had encouraged the members of al Shabiba to affiliate their society to al Haras.²

The real triumph of al Haras was achieved when this group gained the support and patronage of Yusif al Suwaïdi and Muḥammad al Ṣadr. Amongst Baghdadi Sunnah al Suwaïdi was second only to al Naqīb. He returned to Iraq from Turkish exile after the armistice. It was a great surprise for the Administration that al Suwaïdi assumed a militant attitude and took part in the anti-British nationalist camp.³ Amongst Baghdadi Shi'ah, al Ṣadr was second to none:

'There's a group of these worthies in Kadhimain ... bitterly pan-Islamic, anti-British 'et tout le batoclan'. Chief among them are a family called Sadr, possibly more distinguished for religious learning than any other family in the whole Shiah world'.⁴

Gertrude Bell met Sayid Ḥassan al Ṣadr (father of Muḥammad) on the 13th March 1920:

'I ... told him ... that Faisal was to be crowned. "Over the whole of Syria to the sea?" he asked, with sudden interest. "No", I answered, "the French stay in Beirut". "Then it is no good", he replied'.⁵

The British Intelligence reported the following information which was indicative of the political tendencies of Suwaïdi and Ṣadr:

'Tahsin Bey /al 'Askari/ ... met Yusuf Suwaïdi and Saiyid Muḥammad al Ṣadr at Anāḥ /they left Iraq to escape arrest/, they declared that it was not their intention to join the Turks who are opposed to Arab Nationalism, but that they intended to make their way ... to London. There they proposed to lay their case to /H.M.G./.⁶

The biographer of al Ṣadr pointed out that he was profoundly influenced by Afghāni and 'Abduh's reformist ideas.⁷ Furthermore, he was also influenced by the ideas

1. F.O.371/6352/8635. Intelligence Report No.14, Baghdad, 1st June 1921

2. Al Baṣīr, op. cit., p.142

3. T. al Rāwī, Dkhikera Yusuf al Suwaïdi, (Baghdad, 1930)

4. Lady Bell, (ed.), op. cit., Vol.II, p.484, dated 14th March 1920

5. Ibid., p.485

6. F.O.371/6349/2172. Mesopotamia Intelligence Report, No.3, 15th December 1920

7. 'A. 'Alī, Za'im al Thawra al 'Irāqiya, (Baghdad, 1950), pp.19-23, 25-7

of 'Arab nationalism' emanating from Syria and Egypt and reflected in the 'Ahd group and the National Club of Baghdad.¹ Thus al Ṣadr was to support the constitutional movement and the C.U.P. in its early years, but was disappointed afterwards.² The British considered him as 'a genuine pro-Arab'.³

The Haras programme (al Minhāj al Asāsi) included:

'... 2. The society's aim is the full independence (al Istiqlāl al Mutlaq) of Iraq.

3. The society recognizes one of King Hussein's sons as a constitutional democratic kind of Iraq.

4. The society will undertake whatever necessary action, within evolutionary process, to gain the political aim in clause 2.

5. The society will exert all its efforts to affiliate Iraq into Arab unity ...

7. The primary task of the society is the unity of all Iraqis regardless of their factions and schisms and the society will render all effort to end all differences caused by religions or denominations'.⁴

Such a programme is worthy of some remarks. It was only in late 1918 and early 1919 that the Iraqi nationalist movement was to adopt the aim of al Istiqlāl al Tām. Once the Moslem Turks were replaced by the British, the road was open for new demands which, hitherto, were not on the agenda. Moreover, the new programme treated Iraq as a political entity in itself; no regional demands were requested. However the aim of Arab unity was preserved.

Some Arab historians, in a subjective projection on history, have been playing down the Iraqi demand for a Hashimite king. However, the historical fact remains that such a clause was an essential term in the conditions formulated by the independence movement during that period. Such a fact manifested itself during the Referendum, the events which preceded the rising and during the rising itself. It reflected the influence of Hijaz, Syria and that of the Iraqi nationalists abroad.

A third point which is worth attention is the declared aim of al Haras to unite all Iraqis regardless of their religions or denominational differences.

1. Ibid., pp.20-23

2. Ibid., pp.29-30

3. This was to distinguish him from pro-Ottoman Islamists.
F.O.371/6353/279. Intelligence Report No.17, 15th July 1921.

4. 'A.R. al Hassani, op. cit., pp.58-9

Such a principle represented a deep nationalist awareness and a high political skill. In fact al Haras was very successful in the actual translation of such an aim; its very structure was remarkably non-sectarian. A determined effort was dedicated to bring about such a unity. Contacts were established with the Shi'i mujtahids, the Christians and Jews.

The success of al Haras and the incompetence of Baghdad's al 'Ahd was causing concern for the Iraqi officers in Syria. Furthermore the conflict between the two groups was assuming an alarming turn. Thus the Iraqi 'Ahd in Syria sent, in July 1919, al Madfa'i and Ibrāhīm Kemāl for the purpose of sorting out the differences.¹ 'Alī al Bāzerkān, a founder-member of al Haras, wrote that the 'administrative committee' unanimously refused al Madfa'i's amalgamation plan. This was because of two factors: al Haras rejected leadership from Damascus and resented the idea of considering Britain as the sole supplier of assistance; this was considered as 'a violation of our independence'.²

Subsequent development proved that al Haras was to emerge as the centre of the nationalist movement and consequently the moving spirit of the 1920 rising. Nevertheless it is important to assert that up to late 1918, the nationalists movement was confined to the circles of the intelligentsia. What enabled the movement to influence the bulk of the population, in the mid-Euphrates and elsewhere, was that (tribal and taxation) policy adopted by the Administration which was highly resented by the population. The Administration, by alienating itself from large sections of the society, was acting as the undertaker of its own funeral. The Iraqi Arab nationalists were, on the other hand, aware that in failing to ally themselves with the Shi'ah and the fellāḥīn, they would be playing their funeral march. It was a combination of the Administration's 'blunder' and the nationalists' clever utilization of such shortcomings that enabled the nationalist movement to assume its popular support which, in the final analysis, was its real lever.

III The Nationalist-Shi'i-Tribal Alliance: It is evident that the Iraqi Shi'ah played a distinguished role in the struggle for Iraq's independence. The rising

1. Al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.139-41

2. 'A. al Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.180-3

itself was mainly located in their areas. The Shi'i fetwa had their impact in invigorating a tense situation of restlessness. In short, the Shi'ah 'for the most part /were/ very hostile to /the Administration/'.¹ The growing nationalist-Shi'i alliance and its impact was clearly established by the Civil Commissioner:

'Chief Mujtahid of Karbala /al Shīrāzī/ recently issued Fetwa to effect that service under British Administration was unlawful. This is borne out by increased resignations in Diwaniyah Division ... Fetwa has been issued ... to cause disturbances in Mesopotamia ... /by/ pan-Arab party which includes entourage of above mentioned Mujtahid ... corpse of member of Arab Levies ... was not accorded the usual burial rights by the local Shiah priest. This fact is considerably discussed by tribes and if persisted in elsewhere may seriously affect recruiting'.²

When the disturbances broke out, Wilson wrote to Hirtzel 'It is the Shiah who are doing all the damage. They are undoubtedly bolshevistically inclined, i.e. they are out against all governments as such'.³ In a mixture of bitterness and irony, Wilson wrote:

'The essence of the Shia religion is the denial of the validity of any temporal Government ... As a Shia said to me recently "If the Mahdi himself appeared, the Mujtahids would refuse to recognise him, for to do so would involve the loss of their livelihood"'.⁴

Before examining the motives behind such a Shi'i attitude, one ought to distinguish between four sections among the Shi'ah: the nationalists, the Mujtahids, the Saiyids and the tribal Sheikhs. The first group was in fact an organic part of the nationalist movement. However, by virtue of being Shi'ah or from Shi'i areas or traditions, they were able to extend political bridges which linked the Shi'ah to the nationalist movement. Prominent personalities amongst them were al Ṣadr, abu Tīmman, the Shabībi brothers, Baṣīr, al Sharqī and Bāzirkān.

The Mujtahids were men of religion dedicated to theological studies. Nevertheless, and as the writer tried to show earlier, it was impossible for such men to keep aloof from political problems. The five most prominent Mujtahids of the period between 1916-1920 were al Yazdī (Kufah), al Shīrāzī (Sāmarrā' and then Karbalā'), al Iṣfahānī (Najaf), Ḥassan al Ṣadr and al Khālīsī (Kāḍimāin). It is useful to

1. Lady Bell (ed), op. cit., Vol.2, p.483, 14th March 1920

2. F.O.882/23/MES/20. to S.S. for India No.3496, 18th March 1920

3. A.T. Wilson, Private Letters and Papers, B.M., 52455, Vol.1, letter dated 26th July 1920

4. Ibid., 52456, letter dated 9th June 1920

give some information (as seen by the British) about some of the politically oriented mujtahids:¹

'Saiyid Muhammad Kadhim al Yazdi: the greatest Shi'ah Mujtahid of the day /1919/ ... He is at heart pro-British and very anti-Turk ... and undoubtedly, at heart, he is a hater of the constitutionalists, and a staunch royalist ... His remark to Colonel Stokes was characteristic when, on the latter saying that he was in Persia at the time of the Constitution, he replied, "Yes, when Persia began to go back". His "hakamtu" on the Shar'ah case is final, but he will not give a decision against the decision of /al Shirazi/ ...

Shaikh al Shari'at al Isfahani: the second most important Mujtahid in Najaf and the fourth in the Shi'ah world ... /supported the Constitutionalist/ ... prone to interference in political affairs and to intrigues sub rosa against /al Yazdi/ ... He took a prominent part in the Jihad, but owing to pressure ... It is impossible to say whether he is pro-anything at heart ... He is an O.B. /Oudh Bequest/ Mujtahid distributor ...

Shaikh 'Ali al Shaikh Muhammad Kashif al Ghata: He has great influence among the tribes, both owing to his own personal worth and owing to his family. He is very anti-Turkish. He is openly pro-British ... have very great influence with /al Yazdi/. ...

Shaikh Hasan Sahib al Jawahir: O.B. distributor. Very pro-British, but of no influence.

Shaikh Jawad Sahib al Jawahir: The cleverest man in Najaf ... He invariably interferes in politics, and no intrigue can be carried on without his knowledge.

Shaikh 'Abdul Karim Jazairi: ... Very prominent as an enemy propagandist before the fall of Baghdad. His brother, Shaikh Muhammad Jawad, was arrested in connection with the captured documents found with the German Political Officer in 'Anah.²

Haji Agha Mahmud al Hindi: O.B. distributor ... Openly pro-British ... He acts as /al Yazdi's/ secretary ... He has rendered excellent services, both in September 1917 and during the blockade³ ... he is not influential.

Shaikh Mahdi al Shaikh Asadullah: O.B. distributor ... of no influence. A hearty admirer and supporter of the British Government ...

Saiyid Ja'far Bahr al 'Ulum: Of the famous family ... and so respected. O.B. distributor. Pro-British and one of the very few who seems to have the courage of his convictions. His cousin, Saiyid Muhammad 'Ali, will be remembered in connection with the captured document, and suffered accordingly.

Shaikh Mahdi Kishmiri: O.B. distributor ... Pro-British, but of no influence whatever ...

Saiyid Abdul Qasim Kashani: Now in Kadhimain. An intriguer and thoroughly pro-Turkish.

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1. C.O. 696/1. Admin. Report of Shamiyah and Najaf, 1918, Appendix II, pp.106-8
 2. The British troops captured some documents which indicated that the anti-British group in Najaf was in contact with Ottoman forces.
Cmd.1061, Review of the Civil Administration ..., op. cit., p.124
 3. Infra pp. 339-40.

'Saiyid Ahmed Behbahani: A well-known royalist ... dismissed by the constitutionalists. Very and openly pro-British, but probably mad ...'.¹

This shows that those mujtahids who were pro-British were not few.

However, the general trend among them was evidently hostile to the Administration. It also reveals the relationship between the Oudh Bequest and the support rendered to the Administration. It does not fail to disclose the real mutual sympathy between al Yazdi and the British Authorities.

The third group of Shi'ah was the Sayids who claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad and thus enjoy a considerable respect among the Shi'ah. Some of the Sayids were allotted land by the Ottomans thus becoming cultivators, land-holders and pro-Turks. Such a situation was to bring them closely into touch with, and give them a respectable position among, the tribesmen. And they, in many ways, formed a link between the mujtahids and the tribesmen.

Prominent political personalities among the Sayids were the following:

'Sayid Nur al Yāsiri': the most prosperous and respected of the Sadat in the district ... Owns large area of land al Ibrāhīmiyah and al Mushkāb ...

S. Husain Muqotar: Owns considerable land in the south of Ghammas ... Age about 34 ... Both he and Saiyid Hadi his uncle were suspected of intriguing with 'Ajaimi al Sa'dun pro-Turk and interned in India in July 1918.

S. Hadi Muqotar: of Shinafiyah, land-owning very large properties ... The Muqotar enjoyed the favour of the Ottoman Government and were actively helpful to the Turks until we established effective control over the Middle Euphrates in November 1917 ... his great influence in Shinafiyah was reported to be directed covertly against us ... He was implicated in all the Najaf disturbances.

S. Muhsin Abu Tabikh: The largest landowner in Ghammas ... Age about 36. Has considerable influence ... Pro-Turkish at heart, and was suspected of complicity in the plot to murder the P.O.'s in the Shamiyah in February 1918.

S. Hadi Zuwain: about 40, head of his family. Represented British Government interests in Shamiyah before the Political Occupation of the District, but much given to intrigue ... Not to be trusted.

S. 'Alwan al Saiyid 'Abbas: Age about 34. ... Has considerable land between al Fatlah and al Ibrahim on the left bank of al Mishkhab ... Saiyid Nur voices his thoughts. Not to be trusted.

The same report gave some more information on the Shāmiyah Sheikhs:

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1. Yazdi was an Arab. He died on 30th April 1919. Isfahāni was of Persian origin, became Chief Mujtahid on 13th August 1920 after the death of Shīrāzi. Ghītā', Jazā'iri and 'Ulum were all Arabs. Jawāhir, Kāshāni and Behbehāni were of Persian origins. Asadullah and Kishmīri were of Indian origins.

'Mujbil al Fara'un: Head of the Fatlah tribe in the Mishkhab ... he succeeded his brother Mabdir, who died in September 1918¹ ... He /Mujbil/ was very useful to us immediately after the occupation.

'Abdul Wahid al Haji Sikah /sic/ ... Cultivates a large area on the left bank of the Mishkab from Abu Sukhair to the Ibramim. Very able and more far-seeing than the average ... Emphatically the most powerful of the Fatlah and, next to Saiyid 'Alwan, probably the greatest influence in Mishkhab. A man of strong personality ... Should be always carefully watched.

Muhammad al 'Abtan, Khaza'il: A man of considerable local influence, which was enhanced by a grant of Rs.1,000/-P.m. from Government before we effectively occupied the country ... is definitely anti-English, ... Imprisoned 23rd December for general disobedience. The most powerful Shaikh in Shamiyah /about 40/.

Salman al 'Abtan: Brother of above. He also used to draw an allowance of Rs.1,000/-P.m. from Government, which has been discontinued ... Not to be trusted.

Marzuq al 'Awwad: Raise of the 'Awabid ... with a strong hold over his tribe. Untrustworthy ...

'Alwan al Haji Sa'dun: of ... the Bani Hasan shaikhly house. He controls the section of the Bani Hasan south of Kifil - those north follow his brother, 'Umran ... In the days of no Government ... he controlled affairs at Kufah ...²

The factors behind Shi'i hostility to the British rule could be divided into general and particular. The general elements would be divided into socio-political and intellectual motives. The Shi'i areas were the hardest hit by the taxation and land policy of the Administration. This was coupled with the fact that such areas had enjoyed a period of no Government in addition to subsidies and allowances. The sudden shift to the reimposing of a hard administrative control was to be resented.

The intellectual motive is easily found in the very nature of the Shi'i faith which 'was out against all governments'; more so when the temporal Government was a Christian one. In spite of certain measures by the British to satisfy some of their demands,³ it should be remembered that the Shi'ah had always distinguished between Sultān Jā'ir and Sultān Kāfir. The latter was, to them, much worse. Moreover, the Turkish rule since 1908 had shown comparatively more tolerance towards

1. Mubdir al Far'un was politically oriented Sheikh. He was influenced by 'Arab nationalism' through the contacts of Sayid Talib.

2. Ibid., pp.110-111

3. With the object of partially remedying some grievances, the British appointed some Shi'i jurists under the name of Niyābat-al Ja'fariyah for the trial of cases of personal status between Shi'ah. F.O.371/6369/E.14013. Mesopotamia Judicial Department. Report on the Administration of Justice for the Year 1920. Government Press, 1921, Para 7.

the Shi'ah.¹

Persian Shi'ah (in Iraq) had in their turn, their own good reasons to assume an anti-British stance.² In fact al Shīrāzī, Ismā'īl al Ṣadr al Khālīṣī (both Arabs) and al Isfahānī had openly protested against the Anglo-Persian treaty and demanded its abolition.³

The particular reasons which decided the Shi'i resentment of British Administration could be found in two major events: the Najaf disturbances (1918) and the death of Sayid Kadim al Yazdi (1919).

(i) The Political developments in Najaf since the War: It is important to examine the situation in Najaf against the background of two factors. First, the various socio-political forces in the area; the local sheikhs of Najaf's four quarters; the mujtahids; the wealthy families of Najaf; the sayids; and the tribal sheikhs of the area. From a historical point of view one should distinguish between three distinctive stages; that is, from May 1915 to August 1917; from August 1917 until May 1918; and from the latter date up to June 1920. Each period witnessed the rise and fall of different political powers with different political alliances and opposition

By May 1915, the Najafi population led by its local shiekhs had finally ejected the Ottomans. From that time till August 1917 Najaf and the surrounding areas 'enjoyed' a period of autonomy. Power, inside Najaf, was placed in the hands of the four sheikhs, each representing one quarter of Najaf. They were Sayid Mahdi b. Sayid Salmān (titular head of the Zuqurt section), Ḥāji 'Aṭiyah Abu Kulal, Kāḍim Ṣubbi (Zuqurt) and Ḥāji Sa'ad b. Ḥāji Rāḍi (head of Shumurt).⁴ Among themselves they shared absolute power and concluded a 'constitution' and a 'union' to organize the town.⁵

Together they held not only political power but they also acquired 'considerable wealth'. For instance, Ḥāji 'Aṭiyah had 'by spring of 1917, amassed very

1. Kāmil al Jādirji, Min Awraq Kāmil al Jādirji, (Beirut, 1971), pp.84-7

2. S.H. Longrigg, Iraq ..., p.96.

3. M. al Khālīṣī, Baṭal al Islām, op. cit., un.p. manuscripts, pp.120-2

4. C.O.696/1. Baghdad Admin. Report, 1917, p.142

5. C.O.696/1. Admin. Report Shamiyah and Najaf 1918, p.111

considerable wealth from municipal exactions, /and/ ... the sums which he, in common with other leading sheikhs were receiving from /the British/ for the maintenance of the resistance of Najef to the control of the Turks'.¹

'The Mujtahids ... and such families as that of the Kiliddar, men of wealth and education, accepted the domination of the tribal sheikhs only because the alternative was the still more distasteful domination of the Turks; the merchant class suffered from their actions ...'.²

Of those families who are of interest to this work were the following:

'S. 'Abbas Kiliddar (Rufai'i Family) ... The richest family in Najaf. He has done excellent service since the fall of Baghdad and is certainly pro-British ...

S. Hadi Naqib al Ashraf ... In reality a great supporter of Government, but pitifully weak and vacillating and consequently useless when he is most needed ...

Haji Muhsin Shallash - The richest financier and merchant in Najaf. He did invaluable work during the Blockade ... In political matters he is, however, unreliable ...'.³

It was not the British Administration's intentions, nor perhaps in its power, at an early date, to impose its authority over Najaf and the surrounding areas.⁴

During the period of 'no government', the relations between Najaf rulers and the British Administration were highly cordial. A few months after May 1915, Najaf's leaders were in correspondence with the British Authorities.⁵ In early 1917, Hāji 'Aṭiyah sent a message to the British inviting them to 'advance on the Eurphrates and join his tribal forces'.⁶ Immediately after the conquest of Baghdad, the town sheikhs came in to see Sir Percy Cox and rendered to him their congratulations.⁷

However, the British-Shi'ah amity did not last for long. In August 1917, a Government Agent was sent to Najaf in the person of Ḥamīd Khān who was from an influential Najafi family. It was suggested that al Yazdi was behind the choice

1. F.O.882/27/3171, Mesopotamia, Affairs in Nejef, p.115

2. Ibid.

3. C.O.696/1, Admin. Reports, Shamiyah and Najaf 1918, Appendix III, p.108

4. F.O.882/27. Affairs in Najaf. 'Immediately after the conquest of Baghdad ... /the British/ were not then in a position to substitute any other authority for that which they /the four sheikhs/ exercised. p.115

5. Ibid.

6. F.O.882/26/Arab Bulletin, No.41, February 1917

7. F.O.882/27/Affairs in Nejef

and the appointment.¹ The Administration was moving into a new 'stage' which manifested itself in the appointment of regular Government Agents with Police and Revenue staffs.² In September 1917, the British Government exiled Fakhri Kamuna of Karbalā' to India and deported Muḥammad 'Alī Kamuna to Baghdad;³ thus liquidating the 'autonomy' of Karbalā'. In October 1917, Captain Balfour was appointed Political Officer, Shāmiyah, and took up his headquarters in Kufah.

The antagonism of the Najaf sheikhs was soon shown in the first week of November 1917. High prices, shortage of supplies coincided with the arrival of the Bedouin pro-British tribe of 'Anizah and led to the first open breach of the peace. This resulted from the population violently repossessing grain sold to the tribesmen. Captain Balfour ordered the local sheikhs to recover the property taken from the 'Anizah within 15 days.⁴ On the 20th November, at the expiration of the allotted period, Ḥāji 'Aṭiyah organized riots which led to the destruction of sarrāi at Najaf, Kufah and Abu Ṣukhaīr.

In January 1918, British troops and an airplane were fired at. More British troops were sent to confront the situation. This time and under local pressure, mainly by al Yazdi, the sheikhs gave way. They paid a fine and 'Aṭiyah left Najaf.

It is important to observe the political attitude taken by tribal leaders and mujtahids during these events:

'The sheikhs of the Beni Hasan, who are the most influential tribesmen round Kufah ... helped to quell the disorders. Neither here nor among the Fatlah, lower down the Euphrates, was there any evidence of a desire ... to take part against us ...'.

As for the mujtahids and merchants of Najaf, it was reported:

'The Kaliddar gave material assistance to the P.O. during the riot ... while ... Yazdi complied at once with the request of the P.O. that he should act as mediator. On his advice Ḥāji Atiyah and Kahdim Subbi asked and obtained pardon ... Seyiid Hadi el-Zuwaini, the leading man of Jaarah, ... had shown himself consistently pro-British ...'.⁵

1. Ja'far al Khali'ī, Hakadha 'Ariftuhum, Vol.1, (Baghdad, n.d.), p.47

2. C.O.696/1 Admin. Reports, Shamiyah and Najaf, 1918, p.69

3. Cmd. 1061, Review ..., op. cit., p.115

4. Capt. Balfour gave this order (Admin. Rpt. Najaf 1918, p.69) although it was known that 'the stock of grain was already dangerously low'. Affairs in Najef, p.116

5. F.O.882/27, Affairs in Nejed, p.118

However the submission was not complete:

'Haji 'Atiyah refused to visit the C.-in-C. at Baghdad, and both he and Kadhim Subbi maintained a truculent attitude towards the P.O. The Government agent was as powerless as before and the religious and commercial communities suffered from a lack of security which was inevitable as long as Nejef lay at the mercy of the town sheikhs'.¹

On the early morning of the 19th March, a number of Najfis disguised as Shabanah obtained admittance to 'Atiyah's khān (residence of Marshall) and, after disposing of the sentry, murdered Captain Marshall and severely wounded another officer who was with him. The blockade of the town was commenced in earnest by a brigade and severe conditions were proclaimed by the G.O.C.-in-Chief.²

On the 17th April, Najaf surrendered and by the 4th May all the important persons named were arrested. A military court was assembled in Kufah. Thirteen persons were sentenced to death, but in the case of two: Muḥammad 'Ali Baḥr al 'Ulum and Ibrāhīm Behbehāni the penalty was commuted by the G.O.C.-in-Chief to deportation 'in consideration of the plea put forward on behalf of the former by Saiyd Yazdi'. The death sentences were carried out at Kufah on the morning of May 30th.³ Thus the sheikhs' power was put to an end and the British had established firm control over Najaf and Kufah.

In the afternoon of the hanging:

'... a meeting took place in the house of the Kilidar of Najaf ... it was attended by all /sic⁷⁴ the Ulema ... Yazdi ... was represented by his Secretary Mahmud Agha Hindi to whose initiative the ceremony was due. After an eloquent speech delivered by Haji Muhsin Shallash,⁵ a sword of honour was presented to Capt. Balfour ... the meeting constituted a public acknowledgement on the part of the most influential men of the district, of their satisfaction ...'.⁶

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1. Ibid., p.117; M. al Musawi, Al Ḥāj 'Atiyah Abu Kulal, (Najaf, n.d.)
 2. C.O.696/1. Admin Reports, Najaf and Shamiyah for 1918, p.70
 3. They were Karīm, Aḥmed and Muḥsin Ḥājī Sa'ad. 'Abbās and 'Alwān 'Ali Rumāḥī, Sa'id Mamlouk al Ḥājī Sa'ad, Kāḍim Ṣubbi, Muḥsin Albu Ghunaīm, Ḥāj Najim al Baqāl, Juri Nāji and Majīd Ḥāj De'aiybil. 122 persons were exiled, among them al Jazā'iri, six of Al Kulal and a large number of young intelligentsia. 'A.R. Al Hassani, Thawrat al Najaf, (Ṣaida, 1973), pp.78, 83-6
 4. Some of those who attended were: Sayid Ḥādī, Jawād Ṣāḥib al Jawāhir, Sayid Mahdī al Salmān, Sayid Muḥsin abu Ṭabikh, Sheikh 'Alwān al Ḥāj Sa'dun and others.
 5. Shallash said 'The sinful actors played their tragedy of sorrow at Najaf ... We particularly wish today to express our gratitude to our British Government.. F.O.371/3397/165202. Fortnightly Report, No.14, May 15-June 1st 1918
 6. Ibid.; A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.76

This ceremony, with its ruthless disregard for their executed former townsmen, reveals the real political tendencies of Najaf at that time. The rising lacked the support of the majority of its population. Such a conclusion is confirmed by the memoirs of Ridā al Shabībī. It is highly indicative that Shabībī, an eye-witness to the events, did not allow any access to his papers until after his death (1966). It is suggested that throughout the blockade, Najafi Mujtahids and sections of the population had displayed signs of dissatisfaction with the rebels.¹ Yazdi exchanged letters with Wilson asking 'merciful Britain' to pardon the Najafis.

Furthermore, Shabībī pointed out that Sayid Salmān (Sheikh of al Ḥuwaish) assisted the British in reoccupying Najaf. The arrest of the rebel leaders was systematically carried out by the Najafis themselves. Shabībī disclosed that Yazdi refused to assist some of the implicated by declining either to give them refuge or to offer his good services to commute the death penalties. The attitude of the surrounding tribes was similar. They did not help the movement³ but offered to assist the British 'against the rebels'.⁴ Shabībī wrote that all witnesses, including Ḥamīd Khān, refused to incriminate Baḥr al 'Ulum. The sole voice who gave evidence against him was Shallāsh.⁵ Would it not be highly surprising to know that by June 1920, the tribes of Bani Ḥassan, Fetlah and men like Shallāsh, Abu Ṭabīkh, Zuwaīn, Mukuṭer⁶ and Sa'dun were in the forefront of the anti-British rising?⁷ Surprise will deepen when one discovers that even the Arab nationalists of the area (Shabībī, Baṣīr, Sharqī, 'Abd al Mahdi and others) were not involved in the Najafi movement.⁸

1. M.R. al Shabībī, Thawrat al Najaf did al Isti'mār al Bariṭānti 1917-1918, (Manuscript, n.d.)

2. Al 'Arab, 9th April 1918

3. R. al Shabībī.

4. F.O.371/3397/110224, Fortnightly Report, No.10, March 15-April 1st 1920

5. R. al Shabībī

6. Mukuṭer intermediated with the Authorities to accept the surrender of 'Aṭīyah aby Kulal. M. al Musawi, op. cit., p.27

7. Zuwaīn and Mukuṭer joined al Ḥaras and the second led the rising in Dīwāniyah. Shallāsh was 'elected' as 'governor' of Najaf and Abu Ṭabīkh Mutasarīf of Karbalā during the rising. Sa'dun led his tribe and Bani Ḥassan and Fetlah were of the first tribes to revolt.

8. After the Najaf incident, 13 were hanged and 122 were exiled. Not a single one of them was known to be an Arab nationalist. However, Ḥādī and Ḥussein Mukuṭer were also deported soon afterward.

to dispel the confusion, two factors, social and political, might cast a light on the situation. It should be remembered that it was in late 1918 and early 1919 that the Administration embarked on its provocative measures of taxation and land settlement. Thus in summer 1918, the Mujtahids, wealthy families, tribal sheikhs were not directly affected by the British attempt to consolidate its authority in the area. In short, the May rising of 1918 was isolated because other sections of the society did not envisage a British threat to their own interests.

Politically speaking, it is most likely that it was the Referendum of 1918-1919 which had convinced the nationalists of the Administration opposition to Arab rule. Before that date most of the Arab nationalists were cultivating hopes of a British assistance toward an Arab independence.¹ Furthermore the Najaf movement was organized and led by a group of pro-Ottoman Islamist reformers. Such a group was, between 1912 to 1915, led by al Ḥabubi and included the would-be Arab nationalists. However after 1916,² one assumes that the Arabists and the Islamists had parted company. They were to be re-united in 1920 under the new leadership of Shīrāzi and his son Ridā, more especially when the nationalists lost hope in their British bet.

It was reported:

'The proceedings of the Military Court brought to light the fact that the Najaf riot ... was but part of a plot to murder all the /P.O.s/ in the neighbourhood - a plot which might easily have succeeded had not the Najafi commenced too soon'.³

In fact an underground society called Jam'iat al Nahḍa al Islāmiya (The Islamic Renaissance Society) was formed in Najaf in late 1917 with the aim of resisting the British Administration. Its leaders were Sayid Muḥammad 'Alī Baḥr al 'Ulum, Sheikh Muḥammad Jawād al Jaza'iri, Sheikh Muḥammad 'Alī al Danshaqi and Sayid Ibrāhīm al Behbehāni (Mujtahids). Among its members were Ḥāji Najam al Baqāi, Aḥmed, Muḥsin and Karīm Ḥāji Rādi, Kādim Subbi and 'Abbās 'Alī al Ramāḥi (popular leaders). 'Abd al Razāq and Tumān 'Adwah (graduates).⁴ I was assisted by

1. See al 'Arab 1917-1918

2. In 1916, the Syrian hanging, Hilla massacre and Hijaz rising took place.

3. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports, Shamiyah and Najaf 1918, p.70

4. 'A.R. al Hassani, ... al Najaf, op. cit., pp.83-6

the family of the latter to get hold of some of the society's aims:

- '1. ... the formation of an "Islamic League" to achieve Islamic solidarity ...
2. To exert all efforts for the glory of Islam ... to adopt the Muhammadan Shar'a ... denounce all alien traditions ... and to imitate the civilized nations in its characters and politics in what is useful to Islam ...
- 3 ... Support absolute independence of Islamic governments in general and of Iraq in particular ...
4. The spiritual and material support of the Arab society /sic/ if its principle is aimed at complete Arab independence ...
5. The protection of the rights of all non-Islamic sects (Milla)....¹

The movement's isolationism enabled the Authorities to put a quick end to it. However the Administration had completely misunderstood the situation. It adopted the view that 'Events in Najaf, however, speedily brought to light the necessity for a greater control'.² The suppression of the 'challenge' was considered as 'an assertion of our right, our duty and our intention to govern ... The execution had a profound effect throughout Mesopotamia'.³ With such views in mind it was hardly surprising that the Administration, who moved from local autonomy under subsidised sheikhs to control through Government Agents, was to establish its 'third stage - direct control through British Political Officers'.⁴ That stage which started in mid 1918 was, furthermore, characterized by applying measures of taxation, land settlement and tribal policy described in previous chapters. This line introduced a great resentment among the tribes and sayids. Thus the anti-British tendency which was isolated up to mid-1918 started to gain momentum, until it imposed its full predominance by summer 1920. The areas of Shāmiyah, Najaf, Kerbalā' were the centre of the 1920 rising.

Certain points of particular reference to the area might be helpful for a better comprehension of the situation. By 1918 the Khazā'il were in a process of final disintegration. Some 50 years ago they were the undisputed authority of the Mid-Euphrates and entirely 'absolved from revenue'. The Hillah channel began to decay, and the increased flow of water down the Hindiyyah channel soon began to show its effects in a:

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1. Personal communication. *At 'Adwah's library in Hillah.*
 2. C.O.696/1. Admin Reports, Shamiyah and Najaf 1918, p.20
 3. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., pp.74-6
 4. C.O.696/1, Admin Reports, Shamiyah and Najaf, 1918, p.70

'tendency of the Euphrates tribes to migrate from the Hillah and the upper Hindiyyah to the Shamiyah. The Turks were not slow to seize this Heaven-sent opportunity to break the power of the Khaza'il by the introduction of alien and hostile tribes'.¹

Another method to achieve similar ends was the Turkish allotment of lands to the Sayids class, 'there is no doubt that the majority of Sayids' claims were introduced by the Turks and their claims regarded favourably by the Ottoman Government'.²

The sole result of Turkish efforts was the introduction of a large number of landed proprietors, Sheikhs or Sayids, enjoying almost complete local autonomy and

'regarding with only too well-justified contempt the feeble attempts of corrupt officials to collect one per cent of the revenue demanded. The rapidly increasing prosperity of the Shamiyah, the distance from Baghdad, and the proximity of Najaf, as always a centre of intrigue and rebellion, all contributed towards a feeling of independence and confidence in their own abilities which made the Shamiyah shaikhs both the terror and despair of the Ottoman Government'.³

A combination of socio-economic and geographical circumstances were bound to reflect themselves in a, relatively, mature political awareness. It was in 1910-1912 that Fetlah Sheikhs supported Tālib's endeavour at an Arab autonomy,⁴ and at the outbreak of war the Shāmiyah Sheikhs 'were in communication with the Sharif of Mecca for the formation of an independent Arab Government'.⁵

The Fetlah, the more politically aware tribe, was growing in power during the period of British occupation. The decay of the Khazā'il (led by Muhd. and Salīm al 'Abṭān) was in process. The year 1919 'has shown a continuance of this state of affairs'.⁶ That was for two reasons, the Fetlah tribesmen were very well handled by their sheikhs. And secondly, the Fetlah was a rice cultivating tribe. 'In these cases the authority of the Shaikhs over the cultivator

1. Ibid., p.66

2. Ibid.

3. It was also reported that 'The attempt to collect the rice revenue was invariably the prelude to quite extensive autumn manoeuvres on the part of several battalions, and the murder of the hated official was an agreeable pastime'. Ibid.

4. Supra, p.224.

5. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports, Shamiyah and Najaf 1918, p.67

6. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Shamiyah 1919, p.1

is absolute ... The reason for this is ... the absolute necessity for organized labour and constant attention'.¹ Success in rice cultivation is obtained only by the closest co-operation between employers and employee. 'This is fully appreciated by the tribesmen and they willingly put themselves under the control of their Shaikhs'.²

The Bani Hassan were, if at all, growers of wheat and barley, which is less arduous, and discipline among them was in consequence far less strong. Bani Hassan were 'the poorest of the poor cultivators and prefer the wandering life of cattle grazers to anything else'.³ This was due to the fact that their lands were considerably above the level of the river and this precluded flow irrigation. The Political Officer warned that 'Bani Hassan tribe has reached today [late 1919] a stage of poverty and carelessness which if not checked now, must lead to very early disintegration and consequent lawlessness'.⁴ It was also reported that 'it was in vain to expect much help from 'Alwan al Sa'dun [Sheikh of Bani Hassan]. He preferred town existence at Kufah to living among his tribesmen'.⁵ Subsequent development was to bring about all the far-sighted predictions of the Political Officer. 'Lawlessness' was to take over the leadership of the Bani Hassan, which was taken over by 'Umrān (anti-British).

The first sign of tribal discontent was to show itself during the Referendum of 1918-1919, when some tribal sheikhs of the area voted for an independent Arab government.⁶ In early 1920, the British formed some Divisional Councils in Iraq. The first meeting of the Shāmiyah Council was held on January 25th. Two days later 'Abd al Wāhid al Hāji Sikar took the opportunity of seeing Hamīd Khān and propounded to him the following:

'We have heard ... that a son of the Sharif is about to be appointed as king of Iraq and that the British will be replaced by an Arab Government ... and this being so we feel disinclined to pay any further revenue on our rice harvest'.⁷

1. C.O.696/1. Admin. Reports, Shamiyah and Najaf 1918, p.67

2. C.O.696/2. Admin. Reports, Shamiyah, 1919, p.2.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Supra, pp.294-7 545

7. F.O.371/5072. Memo No. C/20 dated 5th February 1920. From P.O. Shamiyah to C.C. Baghdad.

It is clear that an 'Arab Government' meant to Sikar 'no taxation'. A few days later all members of the Council¹ tendered their resignation to the Political Officer of Shāmiyah stating that 'as our country Iraq's future has not yet been decided ... therefore we cannot give any opinion before we know the future of our beloved Iraq'. The Political Officer explained to the Civil Commissioner that

'they took the view ... that any expression of opinion on their part as an official body would (a) be construed as indicating their desire for British Occupation, (b) strengthen the hold of the British Government upon the country ... In spite of the assurances of the past, the Notables of Shāmiyah make little effort to screen their desire for an Arab Government, and this being so, their present attitude in the question of a Divisional Council seems not unreasonable'.²

This unanimous resignation coincided with Abu Timman's withdrawal of Baghdad's Council.³

(ii) The death of al Yazdi and the rise of al Shīrāzi: Nafeesi's claim that al Yazdi 'did much in secret to undermine British authority',⁴ is untrue and misleading. It is sufficient to recall the words of Gertrude Bell:

'Nor will those among us who were participants in the drama /The Referendum/ fail to remember the support which we, on our side, received from ... Saiyd Muhammad Kadhīm Yazdi'.⁵

In May 1918 it was reported that the Political Officer of Shāmiyah visited Yazdi 'On the third visit /28th April 1918/ he complained bitterly of attempts made by some of the Ulema to draw him into an anti-British attitude'.⁶ The report concluded that: 'It is difficult to overestimate the value to us of /Yazdi's/ unbroken support'.⁷

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1. Members of the Council were: 'Abbās Killīdār, Hādī Naqīb al Ashrāf, Muḥsin Shalāsh, 'Abd al Raḥīm Bushrī (Najaf), Hādī al Zuwaīn (Ja'ārah), Muḥsin abu Ṭabīkh (Umm al Ba'rūr), 'Alwān al Hājī Sa'dun (Bani Ḥassan), 'Abd al Wāḥid Hājī Sikar, 'Abādī al Ḥussein (Fetlah), Nur al Sayid 'Azīz, 'Alwān 'Abbās (Shāmiyah Sayids), Leftah Shamkhi (Ja'ārah), Murzuq al 'Awād ('Awābid) and Salmān al Dāḥir (al Khazā'il).
 2. Memo No. ⁵⁴⁵C/20
 3. 'A. Bāzirkān, op. cit., p.89
 4. A.F. Nafeesi, op. cit., p.200
 5. F.O.371/4150/5394. Memo No.S.24. Self-Determination in Mesopotamia, dated 22nd February 1919.
 6. F.O.371/3397/21421. Fortnightly Report ending May 1st 1918. The P.O. suspected Jawad Sahib al Jawaher as the one pressurising al Yazdi.
 7. Ibid.

Yazdi's attitude is not widely discussed in Iraqi literature due, perhaps, to his sacredness. However there are many indications which show that it was as early as 1918 that Iraqi leaders were aware of such an attitude. In his unpublished papers Sheikh Muḥammad al Khālīṣī wrote that al Shīrāzī's departure from Samarā' to Karbalā' was motivated by the proximity of the latter town to the Euphrates tribes where he could incite them into the anti-British drive. Furthermore it was in Karbalā' where Shīrāzī could counter-balance Yazdi's influence.¹ In fact al Khālīṣī considered the death of al Yazdi as an assistance to the independence movement.²

In late 1918 al Ḥaras party established contacts with Sayid Muḥammad Baḥr al 'Ulum.³ The latter informed them that 'Najaf and the mid-Euphrates were useless for the nationalist movement because of Yazdi's attitude'.⁴ It was agreed that Shīrāzī might revive the 'nationalist spirit' if he decided to move to Karbalā'. During the same year Muḥammad Riḍā (son of Shīrāzī) came to Baghdad where he established some contacts with such nationalists as Al Ṣadr, Timman and Bāzirkān. It was agreed between al Ṣadr, al Khālīṣī and Riḍā that Shīrāzī's presence in Karbalā' was essential for the growth of the anti-British movement.⁵

Once settled in Karbalā', Riḍā was to form a group of Shi'i intellectuals which included himself, al Jazā'iri, al Shahrīstānī, Sāḥib al Jawāhir, al 'Ulum and al Shabībī brothers. He established strong contacts with al Ḥaras through the efforts of Bāqir al Shibībī and Ja'far abu Timman. The first of Shīrāzī's open moves was his previously-mentioned fetwa which foiled any pro-British responses in Karbalā' during the Referendum.⁶ Furthermore, his fetwa was distributed in thousands by the nationalists (al Ḥaras) all over Iraq.⁷ In early 1919 al Shīrāzī sent al Shibībī to Hijaz and Syria with letters to Hussein and

1. M. al Khālīṣī, Baṭal al Islām, op. cit., pp.100-102

2. M. al Khālīṣī, Kitāb fi Sabīl Allah, (Unpublished Manuscript), Baghdad n.d., pp.1-2

3. 'Ulum and Jazā'iri return to Iraq from their exile (Muḥamarah) after the Armistice.

4. 'A. al Bāzirkān, op. cit., p.78

5. Khālīṣī, Baṭal ..., op. cit., p.104

6. Supra, pp.298-301.

7. Al Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.79-80; Al Ḥassanī, Al Thawra ..., op. cit., p.35

Faisal protesting against British rule.¹ Ridā al Shabībī 'a man of striking personality, great eloquence and remarkable literary gift'² had shown himself extremely friendly to the British after the occupation. In September 1918 he edited the Administration paper al 'Arab. However after a few months he deserted his job and in January 1919 he led an anti-British campaign and called for al istiqlāl al tām.³

Immediately after the Referendum, al Haras sent Ḥassan Fahmi and Ṣabīḥ Najīb⁴ (both ex-officers) to Syria with copies of Baghdad madbaṭas. Shīrāzi sent Ridā al Shabībī with letters to Hussein and his sons Faisal and 'Ali.⁵ Shīrāzi declared to Faisal his support for 'the Arab league which is the essence of Islamic glory'. He called him to raise his voice in support of the Iraqi struggle for independence. The letter of Ridā (the elder son of Shīrāzi) was more significant. He wrote to 'Ali that he was praying for the survival of the Hashimite crown which 'is the essence of the life of the Arab nation and its existence'. Ridā confirmed that:

'Iraq like all other Arab countries had declared its loyalty (Mubāi'a) to your father. I may add that Iraq is more enthusiastic for absolute independence. Iraq is more nationalistic and closer to Arab unity ... the Iraqis had suffered great difficulties and oppression because they elected one of your brothers ...'.

Ridā requested 'Ali to render his support to the Iraqi struggle against the occupation.⁶ Those two letters disclose how deep was the nationalist-Shi'i alliance in terms of concepts, aims and organization.

The group of Shi'i Mujtahids and intellectuals proved to be of an active and effective character:

'Anti-Government propaganda in this town dates back to about 2 years ago when the present leading Mujtahid ... Shirazi, came to Karbala ... with his son ... Ridha. The latter ... attitude has been invariably hostile and uncompromising, no

1. F.O.371/5242/E.5616. Also Baghdad despatch No.7594 March 23rd 1920. E.3800. Also F.M. al Fir'on, op. cit., pp.91-4

2. F.O.371/5243/E.10272

3. Ibid.

4. A. Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.86-7

5. M.R. al Shabībī

6. F.M. al Fir'on, op. cit., pp.91-5, both letters dated 7th Ramādān 1337 (May-June 1919)

'measure, however friendly, would have the least effect in modifying his views. His father who is over 90 years old is only a tool in his hand ...'.¹

The death of al Yazdi on the 29th April 1919 was a real blow to the British Administration because it left the field free to the influence of Shīrāzi and his son. The Administration could not tolerate the activities of Ridā and decided to deport him and some of his followers to Persia.

'Ridha has taken a prominent part in the anti-British propaganda ... It is largely owing to the intrigues of Ridha, that anti-British propaganda assumed dimensions which rendered advisable the deportation'.²

However such a decision aroused a wide protest among the tribes.³ Shīrāzi threatened to leave Iraq in indignation. 'Political consequences' might have been alarming 'and it was finally decided /by the C.C./ towards the close of the year /1919/ to make easy the decision of the Mirza to remain in Karbalā' by permitting the return of the deportees'.⁴

There was a clever move on the part of the Baghdadi nationalists and Islamists to convince Shīrāzi to settle in Karbalā'. He was to present the sort of leadership much needed in that area and he would make possible the reunion of Shi'i nationalists and Islamists. This unity had suffered greatly after the death of Ḥabubi and the acceptance at face value by the nationalists (more than Islamists) of General Maude's declaration. Shahrīstāni who, for a while, abstained from politics, was to accept Shīrāzi's leadership and renewed his contacts with both Islamic reformers (Jazā'iri, 'Ulum) and Arab nationalists (Shabībī). Shahrīstāni received a letter from the latter in which Shabībī promised to continue the 'common' struggle until 'the Arab flag is raised over Iraq and a son of the Sharif is installed as a king'. Shabībī pointed to the importance of 'more and stronger' organizational links with 'Baghdad', and informed Shahrīstāni that some 'Baghdadi young men' will arrive soon to establish a branch in Najaf for the

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1. F.O.371/5078. Baghdad Memo. No.20760 covering Report by A.P.O. Karbala on activities of Anti-Government Party dated 14th July 1919. The C.C. accused Rida of working for the Bolshevik. The report accused him of inciting the tribes, forming a secret society which was in contact with Baghdad's nationalists.
 2. F.O.371/6348/99. Admin. Report of the Hillah Division for the year 1919
 3. F.O.371/5230E.12038. Baghdad Memorandum Confidential S/724. 9th July 1920
 4. F.O.371/6348/99. Admin. Report, Hillah, 1919. Wilson's letter to Shirazi 9.8.191

'Arab party'. He concluded his letter by asking about the Karbalā' mudbata and offering his respect to Jazā'iri.¹

Further evidence of the organizational links was revealed in Shīrāzi's letter to abu Timman:

'Your Islamic movement in Baghdad has filled us with pleasure' ... We join our voices with yours in shouting "we declare complete independence without foreign interference" ... You must also preserve the rights of Christians and Jews /and/ ... foreigners ... so that your enemy have no charge against your treatment of minorities'.²

The leaders of al Haras were aware of the importance of the mid-Euphrates to their cause. They were also aware of the deterioration in the relations between the leaders of that area and the Administration. Thus al Haras exerted a tremendous effort to strengthen its links with those leaders. In Najaf, Ridā al Shabībī organized a political cell which included Muḥammad Bāqir al Shabībī (editor of al Furāt), Ḥussein and Sa'id Kamāl al Dīn (teachers), Sa'd Ṣāliḥ (teacher), Muḥammad 'Abd al Ḥussein (editor of al Istiqlāl), Muḥammad Ridā al Ṣāfi (small merchant), 'Abd al Razzāq 'Adwah (teacher, deported in May 1919), Ahmed al Ṣāfi and Muḥammed Bāqir al Hilli (poets). In Muntafiq Bāqir al Shabībī recruited Sayid 'Abd al Mahdi (small Sheikh), 'Ali al Sharqi (poet), 'Abd al Karim al Sabti and Muḥammed Hussein Hayder (teachers). The Haras group in Hillah was formed of Khayri al Hindāwi (poet and A.P.O.), Muḥsin abu al Maḥasin (poet), Ra'ouf al Amīn (teacher) and Muḥammad Mahdi al Baṣīr. In Diyala it was composed of Sa'id Sara, Ḥabīb al 'Aydarousi, Mahmud al Mitwali, Maki al Urfali and 'Abd al Latīf al Fārisi. In Karbalā', the distinction between Islamists and nationalists was less clear: a group was formed there by al Shahrastāni and included Ahmed (son of Khurāsāni), al Kāshāni (moved to Baghdad), Mirza 'Abd al Ḥussein (son of Shīrāzi) and Sayid 'Abd al Wahāb (teacher). Sayid Hādī Zuwaīn joined al Haras and worked for its cause among the Sayid of Shāmiyah and Najaf. Two tribal leaders were also to join: Kāṭi' al 'Awādi (of 'Afaḥ and Dagḥarrāh) and Marzuk

1. M.R. al Shabībī, letter dated 21st Rabi'al Awa 1337 (26.12.1918)

2. F.O.371/5076. Mesopotamia Police. Abstract of Intelligence 5th June 1920

al 'Awād (Sheikh al 'Awābid - between Hīllah and Shāmiyah). Zuwaīn, 'Awādi and 'Awād were to form the link between al Haras and the tribal Sheikhs of the area. Shabibi played the same role between al Haras and the mujtahids.¹

The Arab nationalists were active in utilizing the agrarian grievances and in giving a nationalist character to the tribal discontent. In April 1920, they achieved a significant political success by organizing maḍbaṭas which were signed by most of the mid-Euphrates leaders. They recognized 'Abd Allah as king of a 'fully independent' Iraq. I have seen only one original maḍbaṭa which was signed by nine leaders of Samawah and Rumaithah. It was addressed to 'Abd Allah requesting his coming to Iraq and declaring absolute rejection of any Wilāyah (mandate).² The Administration reported this campaign of declaration of loyalty to Abdullah as follows:

'... They are all dated ... (April 12, 1920) ... to assure the Sharif Abdullah that his loyal subjects are eagerly awaiting his arrival. They are signed by: (1) the chiefs and saiyids of the Shamiyah tribes, (2) ... the Samawah and Rumaithah tribes (Bani Huchaim), (3) the chiefs of the Muntafiq, (4) the chiefs and Saiyids of Najaf, Kufah and the Shamiyah, (5) Notables and tribal chiefs of Hillah. Every one of the signatories took a leading part in the subsequent rebellion with the exception of Khayyun al 'Ubaid /Muntafiq and Salman al Dhahir /Khaza'ih'.³

Such maḍbata were of a serious significance. They demonstrated the strength of the links between different groups of Iraqi 'nationalists'; they were signed in April 1920, while the Iraqi Conference of Damascus was held in March of the same year. What was more important is that they amounted to a declaration of independence for Iraq on the part of the Mid-Euphrates tribes, mujtahids and intellectuals. The Administration was aware of the serious implications involved:

'... it was understood in Kerbela that 15,000 liras had been received in Iraq /by Sheikh Sa'id Naqshabandi/ from the Arab Government for distribution amongst the tribes of Shamiyah, Daghara, Hindiyyah, Kerbala, Ududah, Hukkan, Shatra, Samawah ...

1. I collected and organized the above information from the papers of Khālīṣī, Shabibi and Sharqī; the works of Baṣīr, Bāzirkān, Fir'on and Ḥassanī, op. cit.; also A.R. al Hillālī, Al Shā'ir al Thā'ir (B. al Shabibi) (Baghdad, 1965); Y. Izzidein, Khayri al Hindāwi, (Cairo, 1965); M. 'A. Kamaluldien, Sa'd Sālīh, (Baghdad, 1949).
2. Prominent sheikhs who signed were Sha'lān aby al Jun and Ghutha'ith al Harjān (it was they who started the rising of 1920). The maḍbaṭa was undated. Hassan Sha'ban library at Najaf.
3. F.O.371/6350/116. Mesopotamia Intelligence. Report No.6, 31st January 1921. Letters were sent by Bāqir al Shabibi 'who was wacting as correspondent with the extreme Nationalist party in Iraq.'

'Bakir al Shabibi, Shaikh Ali al Sharji /Shi'i intellectuals/ ..., Umar Affendi and Yunis Affendi ibn Hāji Khalaf /ex-Officers, Sunni/ were met in Kerbala and said they had been touring Hillah and Musayyeb to inform the tribes of the Turko-Arab movement ...'.¹

Major Tyler, the Political Officer of Hillah, reported to Wilson that:

'Two Madhbatas are said to have despatched from Kerbala ... If a favourable reply is received to the invitation to the Emir Abdullah, some of the leaders of the movement have determined to take action ... If we take no action ... some form of anti-British Government action may be anticipated ... It is believed that it would be easier to break up the Diwaniyah ring, than the Shamiyah ... Hillah Sheikhs ... are nervous about the spread of possible disorder to their own tribes ...'.²

Those letters manifested the significant political change which had occurred in the area between May 1918 and April 1920. By April 1920 the nationalist-Shi'i 'Ulemā' tribal sheikhs and Sayids alliance was more than an aspiration; it was a reality. During the Najaf disturbances, the anti-British group of Shi'i 'Ulemā', (Jazā'iri and 'Ulum) was isolated and ineffective. In early 1920, the bulk of the area was becoming part of the rising movement which took al Istiqlāl and Arab Government as its aims. Such a development and the contracting of that important alliance was made possible by the Administration's own 'blunders', the death of al Yazdi, the influence of Shīrāzi and his son Ridā and the growth of the nationalist movement inside Baghdad itself. All these factors formed the objective background favouring an alliance. The subsequent strengthening of such an alliance proved to be the backbone of the rising.

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1. F.O.371/5074. Abstract of Intelligence dated March 27th 1920, No.13
 2. F.O.371/5226/E.7284. No.2430-2614. Tuerij, May 14th, 1920

CHAPTER XIV

THE UPRISING OF 1920

I. Prelude to the Rising

(a) The Failure of the Moderate Trend among the Nationalists: By moderates I am referring to those who sought the establishment of an Arab Administration in Iraq, but who accepted British assistance or guidance and opposed, for reasons which will appear in due course, the use of violent methods, more especially when it involved the politicization of the tribes. Prominent exponents of this trend, inside Iraq, were the landed notables, the 'Ahd group (led by Naqshabandi), Sulīmān Faīḍi and Tālib pasha of Basrah. This moderate trend failed completely. In the years 1919 to 1921, it was crushed between opposite poles; the Administration and the frustrated nationalists. Its failure was among the major factors behind the outbreak of violence.

The best illustration of the moderates' dilemma was represented by Sulīmān Faīḍi.¹ In the first place and 'like so many of them' Faīḍi expressed his dislike of the word Wuṣāiyah as the translation of Mandate and preferred Himāyah. He developed his argument on the following lines. Since the British took Baghdad they had been talking about an Arab Government, but three years and more had elapsed and nothing materialized, 'yet you proceed to draw up a scheme without consulting anyone'.² Faīḍi went on to show his fears of the developments:

'You cannot let things go on as at present. The Agitation is taking dangerous proportions. I very much fear open disturbance, not perhaps in Baghdad but in the provinces, for all the tribes are affected. ... I look upon the combination of religion and politics as especially dangerous for it is almost impossible ... to stand up against it. Though I dislike the Mauluds intensely I find myself obliged to go to them ... the boasted reconciliation of Sunnis with Shi'ahs is most distasteful to me and I should regard Shi'ah domination as an unthinkable disaster'.³

1. Faīḍi was interviewed by G. Bell who recorded the interview in a memorandum entitled 'Conversation with Sulaiman Faidhi'. Wilson sent a copy of it to London with the remark 'This may be regarded as a fair exposition of the present moderate view which has developed in the past week'. S.A. Box 303. Memo 17756, dated 14th June 1920. Also F.O.371/5228/E.8915

2. Faīḍi was referring to the Bonham-Carter Committee, which included no Iraqis.

3. Memo.17756.

Ahmed al Dāoud was the President of Majlis 'Ulemā' al Auqāf. He joined the nationalist movement and became one of its accepted leaders.¹ He played a prominent role in the Mawlud movement.² On the 11th August 1920, he was arrested, exiled to Henjam³ and allowed to return in February 1921. 'Since his return he had admitted freely to the High Commissioner ... that his reason for associating himself with the extreme Nationalist movement was mainly personal dissatisfaction with the Administration'.⁴ He published a note 'to all patriots throughout al 'Iraq' in which he called them to 'avoid the harmful ignorance' and to 'support the good intentions of the government'.⁵ Dāoud's declaration came at a time when the nationalist movement was suffering a painful defeat; yet it was reported that 'He enjoys a poor reputation ... and his return appears to have produced little impression'.⁶

In April 1920 it was reported:

'... Government intended appointing an Advisory Committee of 8 Muhamadans and 2 Jews ... Suwaidi was said to be advising the refusal of appointment, but Naqshabandi proposed that all should accept and then make such demands on Government as would be refused whereupon they could resign'.⁷

Although Naqshabandi's argument was hardly 'moderate', it was rejected by the bulk of the nationalists who favoured the more militant attitude of Suwaidi.

Furthermore it was reported that in July 1920 Naqshabandi had disassociated himself from certain acts of the nationalists and 'openly condemned their policy'. He said that the nationalists had sent him two madbatas to sign. The first appointed certain Iraqis⁸ as delegates of Iraq to proceed to Europe. The second was a protest against Government's suggestion of summoning a Council of ex-Deputies to consider the form of election. Naqshabandi said that he refused both

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1. F.O.371/5076. M.P. Abstract of Intelligence, No.21, dated 22nd May 1920, para.386.
 2. Ibid.; also M.P. A.I. No.22, dated 29th May 1920
 3. F.O.371/5081. M.O. A.I., No.33, dated 14th August 1920, Para.678
 4. F.O.371/6350, Mesopotamia Intelligence Report No.7, dated 14th February 1921
 5. al 'Irāq, No.224, 23rd February 1921
 6. F.O.371/6350. M.I. Report No.8, dated 1st March 1921
 7. F.O.371/5074. M.P. A.I. No.14, 3rd April 1920
 8. Hāshim Pasha al 'Umari, Nāji al Suwaidi, Muḥammad Ridā al Shabībī, Yāsīn al Hāshimī, 'Abd al Karīm al Jazā'iri, and Rashīd al Khoja.

and declared that 'they had been prepared by men who sought only their own interests and for this same cause were not shedding oceans of blood on the Euphrates'.¹ Moreover it was reported that there were growing indications of the rise of a moderate party amongst the local politicians 'probably centring round the Naqibs, the Haidaris, the Nayib /āl Naqshabandī/, the Zahawis, the Jamils etc.'. ² On several occasions those families have evinced 'disgust' at the policy of the nationalist leaders and blamed them for the excesses on the Euphrates. The report concluded: 'If only this party could receive encouragement and find an outspoken champion to lead them, Yusuf al Suwaidi, Muhammad al Sadr and company might easily be deflated'. ³

In Mosul a similar development was taking place. The Political Officer reported that al 'Ahd who in the past included among its members a considerable number of older and more influential Ashraf was getting more influenced by younger and more extreme nationalists. In July 1920, Mosul's population incited by the news and letters from Baghdad decided to elect its Mandubīn 'Deputies' (vide infra). A list of forty was 'voted' upon and it included the names of many of the Ashraf 'some of whom were not slow to come to me /P.O./ to say that they had no foreknowledge of what was intended, that popular feeling was too strong for them to refuse to co-operate, but that they intended to use their influence to break the movement up gradually'. ⁴

All these moderate attitudes represented the declared or latent feelings of a considerable section of Iraqi nationalists. They were naturally stronger among pro-British and conservative Iraqis like the influential al Naqīb family of Baghdad. Major Balfour stated that he informed al Naqīb that 'we had suggested deferring a decision on the Amirate for two years. /āl Naqīb al Kaylānī/ said four years not two ... He was very bitter about the Syrian attempt to force an Amir on this country ...'. ⁵ The Naqīb informed Sir Percy Cox that it was not in

1. F.O.371/5078. Secret M.P. A.I. No.29, dated 17th July 1920, Para. 561

2. Ibid., Para. 566.

3. Ibid.

4. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report of the Mosul Division for the year 1920, p.3

the interest of Britain to withdraw its troops from Iraq. 'At the same time, it was difficult for /al Naqib/ to understand how such mischievous talk was allowed to go on'.¹ (He was referring to the press campaign in Great Britain.) However, the Naqib did not openly advise Cox to impose censorship on the British Press or to close the British Parliament!

Curzon's suggestion that the British needed to deal with an Iraqi Zaghlul presented a wise and practical view. It seems that the Administration in Iraq decided to 'find' an Iraqi Zaghlul in the person of Tālib Pasha al Naqib. Gertrude Bell, who argued that 'Talib is entirely unscrupulous' pointed out 'but his interests and ours are the same'.² Thus she suggested that 'We must make him and his like follow respectable courses'.³ Montagu raised the possibility that:

'Support of the pro-British nationalists be secured through not one but two possible leaders, Faisal and Talib and that possibly we may run both ... Talib as Governor of Basrah and Faisal as Arab king at Baghdad'.⁴

Tālib was quite willing to perform his role. His motives were: burning ambitions; the prevailing pro-British attitude of Basrah and his fear of popular agitation, fellāḥīn rising and the Shi'i role. Tālib returned to Basrah from his exile on the 8th February 1920. A few days later he was invited to Baghdad where he stayed for some days as the guest of A.T. Wilson.⁵ The Civil Commissioner telegraphed that Tālib 'is not a man who can be easily fitted into local representative institutions, but he appears to be well disposed and genuinely anxious to co-operate'.⁶ At the end of May, Wilson telegraphed that Tālib was aspiring to be nothing less than Amir of Mesopotamia or at least president of the Council. Wilson added that Tālib was capable of filling the latter post but 'that he was such a rogue, and so cordially hated, that his nomination would not be put forward by the Government'.⁷

1. F.O.371/6349/280. From H.C. Baghdad, dated 15th January 1921.

2. G. Bell, Private Letters ..., (Newcastle), letter dated July 26th 1920

3. Ibid., Letter dated August 30th 1920

4. F.O. 371/5229/E.10440, dated 25th August 1920

5. F.O.371/5231/E.1454

6. F.O.371/52161. From C.C. Baghdad, No.2481, dated 25th February 1920

7. F.O.371/5231/E.5461

In late June, Tālib professed to the British his conviction that British Mandate and guidance were essential for the future progress of the country and 'expressed his readiness to support /British policy/ in any way he could'.¹

Tālib was willing

'to take the risk involved to his life by taking a leading part in local politics on the lines desired by us provided that we guarantee him personal protection and support for himself and his sons somewhat on the same lines as the guarantee we have given to the Sheikh of Mohammerah, accompanied, I gathered with some promise of financial support, as he is a man with practically no private means'.²

Miss Bell pointed out that Tālib requested some money from her which was duly given.³

Captain I.N. Clayton had a long interview with Tālib:

'/Tālib/ said to me quite openly that he could run the country, but that he wished to do so at our request and not as elected by the people. His idea I think is that if put in by us we shall be forced to back him ... He said that in certain circumstances ... it might be necessary to separate Basrah from Baghdad and Mosul.

This may be intended merely to show his loyalty to us in being prepared to go to any lengths ... or it may be prompted by some uncertainty as to his influence in the two northern Vilayet'.⁴

Tālib explained his motives for supporting the British:

'I was fully convinced that Mesopotamia with all its population was going towards its ruin /during the unrest of summer 1920/ if acting under the bad advice of the plotters ... I began my task by cutting all communications between the tribes and the towns, and I succeeded in convincing the latter that the plotters' bad advice could not but conduct to a bad end'.⁵

In September 1920, Tālib addressed the Iraqi public in an open message:

'When I came back to Dar al Salam, I unfortunately found it in a regrettable condition ... On the one hand a demand for independence and on the other looting of property ... I discussed the grave situation with the British Officials and found them willing to reach an understanding on several issues ... but when I discussed the situation with the leaders of the movement in Baghdad, I found them indifferent ... on the contrary they exerted all their efforts at incitement, mutiny and agitating the tribes towards disorder regardless of the grave consequences'.⁶

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1. F.O.371/5227/E.7395 dated 29th June 1920
 2. F.O.371/5228/E.9368. From C.C. Baghdad, No.8976, dated 25th February 1920
 3. G. Bell, Private Letters ..., (Newcastle), letter dated 30th August
 4. F.O.371/5230/E.12461, dated 22nd August 1920
 5. H.St J.B. Philby Papers, St. Antony's College, Oxford, DS.79.8.T2, Letter dated 1st January 1923, to S. of S. for Colonies
 6. al Sharq, No.18. 7. Muharam 1339 (21st September 1920)

In late July 1920, Tālib had a long meeting with al Suwaīdi which Tālib fully reported to the Authorities. Suwaīdi was disappointed at the attitude of Basrah's notables. The nationalists had twice written to Tālib without receiving a reply from him. The nationaists were willing to accept Tālib's leadership if he supported their cause (Tālib says). Suwaīdi went on to inform Tālib of the nationalists strength; Shi'ah and Sunnah are united and the tribes are under nationalist leadership. 'Kathir Zain /very good/. I am an Arab and a native of the Iraq. Explain to me your views'. Suwaīdi replied 'No foreigners, no mandate, no interference from without'. Tālib informed the British that al Suwaīdi relied upon Fuād al Daftari, Ja'far abu Timman and Sayid Muḥammad al Ṣadr. Tālib put the following demands to Suwaīdi as pre-conditions if he was to join the movement:

1. The head of the Iraq State must be an Iraqi, a Sharif of the best blood and family of the Iraq.
2. A committee must be formed of reputable and honourable men.
3. The Policy of political propaganda and incitement to rebellion to be dropped at once.
4. The Ashraf of Baghdad and elsewhere who had not joined Yusuf Effendi's party to be invited to take part in the Committee'.¹

Such conditions confirmed Bell's impressions of Tālib: 'I never came across anyone whose world centred so completely in himself as in the case of Talib ... not a thought but of his own advancement. He was his own unique preoccupation'.² Needless to say all of Talib's conditions were refused. In October 1920, it was reported that 'the Nationalists are strongly opposed to Sayyid Talib becoming Prime Minister in the new Government and in favour of Yusuf al Suwaīdi'.³ It is clear that up to that time Suwaīdi was retaining his extreme attitude towards the Administration even when it was headed by Sir Percy Cox. He wrote to a group of Iraqi nationalists including Yehya al Shāwi and Fetāḥ Pasha 'advising them not to interview the High Commissioner, nor assist him in any way ... All present agreed to follow Yusuf's advice and a letter was sent to him to that effect'.⁴

1. F.O.371/5230/E.11753, dated 28th July 1920

2. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, ^{Newcastle} ~~op. cit.~~, letter dated 25th April 1921

3. F.O.371/5082. S. M.P. Abstract of Intelligence, No.42, Baghdad, 16th October 1920

4. Ibid.

Tālib's failure was reasonably explained by G. Bell:

'The new people /the nationalists/ regard him (Talib) with suspicion, partly because they rightly suspect him of aiming at the position of authority which they want for themselves and partly because they know he is on very good terms with us and not likely to go for a free Arab Government, without a mandate'.¹

The failure of Tālib Pasha was admitted by the Civil Commissioner in a telegram dated 29th July 1920,² and confirmed by another telegram dated 17th August 1920.³

However Tālib was not the only one who was alarmed at the turn which the nationalist movement was taking. His attitude was representative of the outlook and interests of a larger group. Miss Bell pointed out, on several occasions, that even 'advanced nationalists' were interested in pacifying the tribes,⁴ and that anxiety was growing towards 'the terror of the tribes'.⁵ In the midst of the rising, she wrote:

'... it makes me laugh to note the attitude of ... Baghdad notables - they all have estates on the Diyalah, who were ready enough to take a hand in the agitation at the beginning and now have no words bad enough for it'.⁶

It is clear that the 'moderates' resented three aspects of the national movement: its alliance with the Shi'ah 'Ulemā'; its agitation amongst the tribes and attempts to draw the tribes into politics; and finally its encouragement of violence. Such a threefold attitude was a threat to the 'moderates'' political outlook or land interests or both.

Tālib's attitude was, nevertheless, dramatic. He was, after all, the founder of the Arab movement in Iraq. He was, perhaps, the first Iraqi politician to establish contacts with the tribes and to encourage their political involvement. In 1914, he preferred exile rather than cooperation with the British. However 1920 had brought many changes. Basrah's conditions favoured the British; the leader was exhausted by struggle. Tālib threw aside his previous caution and

1. G. Bell, Private Letters ..., Newcastle, letter dated 26th July 1920

2. Sir A.T. Wilson, Private Letters and Papers, B.M. No.52455, Vol.1, From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. No.9180, dated 29th July 1920

3. F.O.371/5229/E.10109. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. No.9006, 17th August 1920

4. Lady Bell (ed), op. cit., Vol.2, p.493, letter dated 20th July 1920

5. Ibid., p.494, letter dated 2nd August 1920

6. G. Bell, Private Letters ..., (Newcastle), letter dated 30th August 1920

rendered an unreserved support to the British, 'I served G. Britain in my life and property at a time when all people were fighting against it. I stood with Government at a time when everyone else were demanding Istiqlāl al Tām ...', Tālib wrote to Philby.¹ During 1920-1921, Tālib accepted to be the striking arm in opposing the nationalist movement and in curbing, as Minister of Interior, its activities and leaders.² Nevertheless, he was to lose again. By alienating himself from the nationalist, he undermined his own position. After the big lesson of the rising, the British were looking for an 'Iraqi Zaghlul' who could calm down the situation. They did not need an 'admirer'. His re-exile was in fact a mercy bullet; a tragic end to a stormy and 'unscrupulous' political life.

The failure of the moderate trend to 'made a headway' raises the question as to the factors which allowed the 'extreme' line to go unchecked and 'undeflated'.

The objective conditions were at the service of the 'radical' line. The Civil Commissioner's reluctance to bring about any satisfactory changes; the land question; the taxation policy; and the jobless Iraqi intelligentsia were all assets to the rising nationalist movement. The extremists were eager to take advantage of the objective conditions springing from the shortcomings of the Administration. In fact, during 1919-1920 the Iraqi nationalists exerted a tremendous effort to bring about the downfall of the British Administration.³

At the outset the nationalists' aspirations were reasonable and well within the promises given by the Allies and the British themselves. Their demands were those of General Maude, President Wilson and the Anglo-French Declaration. In this way Wilson and the Iraqi pro-British must have been left undefendable. In a highly interesting note, Miss Bell wrote:

'The movement in this country is one aspect of a very strong nationalist sentiment ... and has gained immensely in strength and definition from the very principles in defense of which we fought ... We are in presence of a sentiment the roots of which

1. Philby's Papers. Letter (in Arabic) dated 14th November 1921

2. Tālib as M. of I. warned 'those who create secret parties or hold secret meetings or spread false rumours ... will be punished severely'. al 'Irāq, 24th February 1921. He closed al Istiqlāl paper and arrested several of its writers, Baṣīr, al Badri and Qāssim al 'Alawi.

3. Even a 'moderate' and a life long friend of Tālib like Faīdi was to desert him because of his 'compromising' attitude with the British. S. Faīdi, op. cit., pp.133, 244-5, 253, 262-4

'go further and deeper and touch so to speak the roots of our own action in the greatest trial which we as a nation have known.'¹

However, Miss Bell's argument leaves no doubt that the nationalists' approach had won the first round, Wilson himself admitted it:

'Why, we ask should /the rising/ have occurred? ... The end of the Nineteenth Century witnessed the revival of Nationalism in Europe and Asia - a re-action of the man in the field and the street from the conception and existence of great Empires ... Critics of Nationalism as a constructive policy were silenced ... Nationalism held the field, and every official utterance of the Allies, and of the Allied Nations' chosen leaders, emphasized this as the basis of future policy ...'.²

(b) The Nationalists' effort to achieve National Unity: The second move taken by the nationalists was their attempt to establish a national unity. Such a unity was to be twofold: Moslems with non-Moslems and Shi'ah with Sunnah. In this respect, the Iraqi nationalists embarked on a procedure of a novelty unheard of in the recent history of Iraq. The previously-mentioned Shīrāzi letter was an advice in that direction. Then came the 'unprecedented spectacle' when the Baghdadi Christians were practicing some of their religious rituals.³ 'A deputation of Mohammedans /composed of abu Timman, al Dābud, al Bāzirkān and others/ assembled a band of 'enlightened' young Sunni and Shiah who threw flowers and scented water on the procession as it passed, and shouted 'Long live the Glory of our Lord the Christ ... Long live our brothers the Christians. Long live the Iraqi Union. Long live the patriotic Union'. The Christians including priests replied 'Long live our brothers the Muhammadans. Long live the Arabs'. The Moslems entered the Church and stayed to the end of the procession. The Intelligence report concluded:

'There was a good deal of sentimental talk over this unprecedented spectacle and many said that thanks were due to the British for thus unwillingly being the cause of such a union'.⁴

Some few days earlier a 'Mawlud' was held on the 31st May at Sheikh Sandel mosque under the patronage of al Suwaīdi. The speeches and Qaṣā'id (poems) 'were

1. G. Bell, Private letters ..., (Newcastle), Note dated July 1920. See Appendix, VIII.

2. S.A. Box 303. Speech by the A.C.C. at Railway Directorate Dinner, 20th September 1920. It was his 'farewell' speech to Iraq.

3. 'Aīd al Jassad. (Corpus Christi)

4. F.O.371/5076. M.P. Abstract of Intelligence, No.23, dated 5th June 1920, para 442

as usual, inflammatory in tone and almost entirely political'. Mulla 'Uthmān called for the unity of Moslems, Christians and Jews for the independence of Iraq.¹ Intelligence reported, on May 29th, leaflets and messages addressed to Jews and Christians asserting the unity, and brotherhood of all Iraqi sects and called them in the name of the one fatherland and the one destiny for unity with Moslems to achieve Iraq's independence.² Similar leaflets and calls were taking place in Mosul.³ Those attempts were not without effect.

'The Syrian and Chaldean Archbishops of Baghdad together with Latin Chaldean and Armenian priests and notables proceeded to Kadhimain on the 18th June 1920, to congratulate the Ulema - Sayyid Muhammad Al Sadr and others /on the occasion of 'Īd al Fitr/ A Jewish deputation headed by the Chief Rabbi also waited upon the 'Ulema'.⁴

It was also reported:

'There is evidence that the letters from the Muhammadans addressed to Jews and Christians have pleased the two latter immensely. Many declare their intentions of supporting the Muhammadans in their demand'.⁵

The nationalists had thus averted any sectarian conflict which might have discredited their struggle internally or internationally. On more than one important occasion the Jews and Christians were to show support for the line advocated by the nationalists as will be shown later. It is evident that the period which elapsed between the Referendum of 1918-1919 and summer 1920 had witnessed an important change in the attitude of the minorities in the direction favourable to the independence movement.

The first symptom of Shi'ah-Sunnah rapprochement had occurred in summer 1919 when the Sunnah attended, in large numbers, the religious meetings (fātiḥah) which were held in memory of the deceased Shi'i Mujtahid Sayid al Yazdi.⁶ In May 1920 and due to an initiative by al Haras an unprecedented event was to take place, a combination of two completely different ceremonies was to be

1. Ibid., Para.421

2. Ibid., M.P. A.I. No.22, dated 29th May 1920, Para.418

3. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report of Mosul Division for the Year 1920, p.2

4. F.O.371/5077. M.P., A.I. No.24, dated 19th June 1920, Para.484

5. F.O.371/5076, M.P. A.I. No.22, dated 29th May 1920, Para.428

6. Al Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.189-190. Also A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.253

held, the Shi'i ta'ziyah (to commemorate the martyrdom of Ḥussein) and the mawlud (to celebrate the birth of the Prophet). There was no doubt that such a step was motivated by political reasons;¹ it was reported that:

'On Friday last before a crowd of worshippers the "Mawlud" was read by Mulla Uthman and the "Ta'ziyah" by Shaikh Muhammad Mehdi al Basir al Hilli, both Shia and Sunni taking part. Such a thing has never before occurred in Islam. People who objected were silenced and told that all must combine as long as the common enemy - Britain - is before them'.²

From that time and until the Government had officially banned the mawluds (on August 14th), such meetings went on increasing their attendance and displaying an unparalleled Shi'ah-Sunnah unity.

The political advantages for the nationalist cause gained by such meetings are clear enough. 'It is reported that ... Ahmed /āl Dāoud/, Ja'far abu Tumman and Ali Bazirgan resolved that Mawluds must be held at least twice a week in order to keep grip on the people'.³ Miss Bell pointed out that by this 'un-examined event', the nationalists 'have adopted a line difficult in itself to combat'.⁴ Wilson wrote that:

'The priesthood of Karbala, Najaf and Kadhimain were, with notable exception, frankly hostile ... They allied themselves to the nationalist movement ... and lent the weight of their authority to arguments which would be understood by the most ignorant'.⁵

It was also reported that:

'It is difficult to say how long the two /Sunni and Shia/ will run together ... Political matters are now discussed everywhere and by everyone and with little reserve. They have gained confidence by this union ... and criticise Government with far greater license than before. The great object of these 'Mawluds' is to reach the lower classes and excite them to take an interest in political affairs. It is from this class that danger threatens'.⁶

(c) The 'Election' of Mandubīn: In late May the nationalists were convinced that the time was ripe to step up their campaign by electing a committee to represent the people and to put forward, openly and officially, the cause of

1. Shīrāzi and Khālīṣī issued Fetwas encouraging the Shi'ah to pray at Sunni Mosques. Interview with Hādī al Khālīṣī.

2. F.O.371/5076. M.P.A.I. No.21, dated 22nd May 1920, Para. 388

3. F.O.371/5078. M.P.A.I. No.29, dated 17th July 1920, Para. 564

4. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, (Newcastle), dated 1st June 1920

5. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.253

6. F.O.371/5076, Police Intelligence Report, No. 21, dated 22nd May 1920

independence to the authorities. Thus a large mawlud (7th Ramaḍān, 26th May, 1920) which ended in a violent clash with the police,¹ elected the following people as mandubīn to represent the 'nation's cause'. They were: al Suwaīdi, al Ṣadr, al Dāoud, abu Timman, al Bāzirkān, Aḥmed al Dāhir, abu al Qāssim al Kāshāni, Rif'at al Jādirji, 'Abd al Raḥman al Haiydari, Sa'id Naqshabandi 'Abd al Wahāb al Nā'ib, Fu'ād al Daftari, Ḥāj Yāsīn al Khudāiri, Muḥammad Muṣṭafa al Khalīl and 'Abd al Karim Sayid Ḥayder.² The first five were to form an executive committee for the delegation.³ In fact they were considered by the Administration as the ringleaders of the nationalist movement in Baghdad.⁴

The deputies met and wrote a letter to the Civil Commissioner requesting an interview. They declared themselves to him as the deputies of Baghdad and Kādimāin.⁵ Wilson agreed to meet them but in order to counter their claim he extended the invitation to some other 20 Baghdadi notables of whose support he was assured.⁶ According to the private papers of al Jādirji, a Jewish employee at the Office of the Military Governor of Baghdad volunteered to divulge the news to Kāmil.⁷ Soon it was known by Suwaīdi.⁸ The nationalists held a meeting and Suwaīdi argued that 'We must write to the tribal chiefs and townspeople asking them to be ready to revolt if our rights are denied us'.⁹ To foil Wilson's plan of dividing Iraqi opinion it was decided to call the other notables to a meeting. The gathering was held in al Jādirji's house. The nationalists urged the other invited notables to a unified stance in front of Wilson. They formulated their

1. F.O. 371/5076. M.P., A.I. No.22, 29th May 1920

2. They were 8 Sunni and 7 Shi'ah. Dāhir (man of letters), Kāshāni (Shi'i mujtahid, Persian, close to Shīrāzi), Jādirji (70, landed notable, head of Baghdad's municipality during Turkish era), Haiydari and Khudāiri (both of rich and known families, very moderate), Khalīl (Ḥaras), Ḥayder (of a religious family).

3. al Baṣīr, op. cit., p.156

4. F.O.371/5078. M.P., A.I. No.29, dated 17th July 1920, Para. 569

5. al Hassani, op. cit., p.64. Their letter was dated 28th May 1920

6. They were: Maḥmoud and Dāoud al Kaylāni, 'Abd al Majīd al Shāwi, 'Abd al Qādir al Khudāiri, Muḥammad Hassan al Jawhir, Sheikh Shukir, Ṣālih al Milli, 'Alī al Allusi, Khisru Quimijān, Sāsoun Ḥisqāil, 'Azra Danlāl, Yahuda Zalouf, Maḥmoud Shabendir, Maḥmoud al Aṭraqji, Ja'far 'Aṭīfah, Jamīl al Zahāwi, 'Abd al Karīm Jalabi, Maḥmoud al Istirabādi, 'Abd al Husseīn Jalabi.

7. Private Papers of Kāmil al Jādirji.

8. F.O.371/5076. M.R., A.I. dated 5th June 1920, Para. 421

9. Ibid.

demands which were rather moderate and thus won the support of other notables.¹ That was a painful blow to Wilson's plans and an important political victory to the nationalists. Next day Sāsoun Ḥisqāīl, the prominent Jewish leader, visited al Suwaīdi and agreed with him to present a unified stance in front of the Civil Commissioner.²

The meeting took place in the Government sarāi on June 2nd. A large demonstration had gathered around the sarāi and greeted the mandubīn with shouts demanding al Istiqlāl.³ Wilson opened the proceedings by a long speech which was read by Hussein Afnan:

'... /H.M.G./ desire to set up a National Government in this Country ... the delay that has occurred ... is due to causes beyond our control ... It is my duty ... to warn you that any further incitements to violence and any appeal to prejudice will be met by rigorous action ... I will now turn to the question of the future form of government ... I may tell you that, broadly speaking, the lines on which we have been proceeding are as follows: We desire to establish Council of State under an Arab president, to hold office until the question of the final constitution of Mesopotamia has been submitted to the Legislative Assembly which we propose to call ...'.⁴

Suwaīdi, on behalf of the delegation, presented the demands:

1. Establishment of an Iraqi Assembly to represent the country and decide upon the future Government of Iraq.
2. Freedom of Press.
3. The Lifting of restrictions on postal and telegraphic communications within the country and with the outside world'.⁵

Ṣadr asserted the peaceful nature of the movement which 'did not contradict the promises of the Allies'. Suwaīdi argued that their demands were in harmony with what Wilson himself had said. 'But why is the delay in forming the National Government' asked Suwaīdi and warned that 'the nation's patience is running out'. The 'pro-British' faction supported the nationalists' argument and no opposition was voiced.⁶ The Civil Commissioner advised them:

1. Jādirji's Papers. The meeting was on 30th May.

2. F.O.371/5076. M.P., A.I. dated 5th June 1920, Para. 422.

3. Ibid., Para. 448

4. F.O.371/5228/5093, dated 2nd June 1920; al Iraq No.3, 3rd June 1920

5. al Baṣīr, op. cit., p.170. Also A. Wilson, op. cit., p.257

6. al 'Irāq, Nos. 3 and 4, dated 3rd and 4th June, 1920. Also al Baṣīr, pp. 169-172

'not to be misled by appearances. Mesopotamia has been under an alien Government for 200 years, and with the best will in the world an indigenous National Government cannot be set up at once. The process must be gradual or disaster is certain.'¹

The meeting could not hide the profound differences of the two sides. The nationalists' aim was the immediate establishment of a national assembly to decide the future government of Iraq. Wilson's attitude was the indefinite delay of such a step. In essence he was fully opposed to the mere idea of such an assembly:

'for it was no secret that the intention of the delegates was to arrange for a declaration by the Convention of the independence of Iraq, followed by the rejection of the British Mandate ...'²

In fact what Wilson really wanted was:

'Under provisional constitution Government would be carried on by Council of State and a legislative Assembly. Council of State (1) to be the principal executive authority and a second chamber of legislature. (2) To consist of, say, 11 members and president, all nominated by the High Commissioner. (3) President to be an Arab of good status and prestige. (4) The constitution should not specify relative numbers of British and Arab members (it can in practice). At first there would be English majority, for example, six to five. (5) The High Commissioner to have power over the ruling decisions of Council of State'.³

As a last attempt to handle the situation, Wilson, on 12th July, declared:

'H.M.G. has authorized the Acting Civil Commissioner to invite the leading representatives of various localities to co-operate with the Civil Administration in framing proposals under which election to the General Assembly will, in due course, be held, and in making the necessary arrangements for electoral areas, the preliminary to the register of electors and other matters preliminary to the election of the General Assembly. In as much as there are at present in Iraq individuals who were the representatives of Iraq in the Turkish Senate or the Turkish Chamber of Deputies ... all those ex-Senators and ex-Deputies have been invited by the Civil Commissioner for the above mentioned purpose ...'⁴

Wilson's aims were clear and in Gertrude Bell's words 'For the extremists have seen the ground cut under their feet by the formation of a moderate constitutional party round the committee of ex-deputies and they have no card left by an appeal to the mob'.⁵

1. F.O.371/5228/5093; al 'Irāq, 3rd June 1920

2. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.257

3. F.O.371/5226/E.3982. From C.C. Baghdad, No.5112, dated 27th April, 1920

4. Cmd. 1061, op. cit., p.142; al 'Irāq, 12th July 1920

5. Lady Bell (ed), op. cit., p.495, letter dated 16th August 1920

In fact Wilson's step caused a certain split in the ranks of Iraqi leaders. The invitation to this 'Committee' was distributed on the 10th July and was published in the local press on the 12th. The 'extreme' nationalists opposed it immediately, Suwaïdi argued:

1. The ex-delegates were elected for a period of two years only, which has long since elapsed. They have therefore no standing now.
2. The ex-delegates were all C.U.P. men who proved themselves traitors to the country.
3. Some of them are pure Turk, pushed in by Turkish influence.
4. The Turkish rules for the election of Deputies are still in print and can be adapted by Government with the assistance of the Nationalist Deputation.
5. Most of these ex-Deputies are now Government officials or pro-Government and are now favoured by the people and therefore would not elect suitable substitutes for those Deputies who are absent or who have died'.¹

Furthermore, they called some of the ex-deputies (Tālib, al Shāwi, Faïdi and others) to a meeting with the purpose of foiling Wilson's attempt. Suwaïdi and Ṣadr argued that the acceptance of this committee was a betrayal of the 'armed revolution' which the Iraqi people were waging. The others were of the opinion that the 'nation's demands' could only be fulfilled through an elected legislative assembly who alone could decide the future form of government and negotiate with the British. The absence of such a committee could only 'help the English delays'.² Faïdi met abu Timman, Ḥassan Riḍā and 'Abd Allāh Thuniyān. He warned them that the success of the 'armed revolution' was not guaranteed; its failure would bring about the worst consequences. The 'Committee' was the best chance for the nationalists, argued Faïdi, to unite their ranks and confront the British with their demands. If the British rejected such demands, they would be exposed and the 'revolution' would be more effective. However, the two sides failed to reach an agreement.³ Naqshabandi also was opposed on this issue to Suwaïdi's policy of boycotting the 'Committee'.⁴

1. F.O.371/5078. M.P., A.I. No.29, 17th July 1920, Para. 567

2. M.Ṣ. al Daftari Papers.

3. S. Faïdi, op. cit., pp.246-57

4. F.O.371/5078/ M.P., A.I. No.29, 17th July 1920, Para. 566

The 'Committee of ex-Deputies' held its first meeting on the 6th August, 1920. Some 17 notables¹ attended that meeting and elected Tālib as a president and co-opted 19 Iraqis to replace those who died or were absent.² Apart from 3 nationalists (Ṣadr, Suwaīdi and abu Timman), the rest accepted the invitation and attended the 'Committee's' second meeting.³

The nationalists who saw the inception of this Committee as a challenge to the 'will of the nation who elected them' threatened death to those who accepted its membership.⁴

The nationalists 'appealed to the masses'. Violent mawluds and huge demonstrations broke out in Baghdad. Since the first of July the rising was taking over the Euphrates and news of serious British setbacks was reaching Baghdad. Karbalā', Najaf, Shāmiyah and Mosul had 'elected' their Mandubīn. Several arrests, detentions and a killing was the Administration's response to Baghdad's mawluds. Intelligence reports indicated a nationalist plan to allow tribes to enter Baghdad, Police stations in Kāḍimāin 'were to be seized and utilized'.⁵

Thus on August 11th, the Civil Commissioner ordered the arrest of Suwaīdi, Ṣadr, Timman, Bāzirkān and Dāoud.⁶ The Authorities prohibited mawluds or any other form of political gathering.⁷ Of the five leaders only Dāoud was arrested, all others made good their escape over neighbouring houses 'with the connivance of their owners'. At the house of Suwaīdi fire was exchanged 'numerous arrests were made'⁸ and 'before the Military Court 6 of those were condemned to death'.⁹

1. Prominent among them were Fu'ād al Daftari, Murād Sulīmān (brother of Hikmet and Shawkat Pasha, leader of the Iraqi C.U.P.), Dr. Sāmī Sulīmān, al Zahāwī Sāsoun Hīsqāil, Tālib.

2. Prominent among them were, Suwaīdi, Ṣadr, abu Timman, Dāoud al Naqīb, Muzāḥim al Bājhji, Nāji Shawkat.

3. S. Faīḍi, op. cit., p.254

4. F.O.371/5081. M.P., A.I. No.33, 14th August 1920. Para.682; they were 'Abd al Jabār al Khayāt, 'Abd al Majīd al Shāwī, Daftari and al Naqīb.

5. F.O.371/5081 M.P., A.I. No.33, 14th August 1920, Paras. 667, 681

6. Ibid., Para 678

7. al 'Irāq, No.63, 13th August 1920

8. M.P., A.I., No.33, Para.678

9. al 'Irāq, No.70, 21st August 1920, they were shot on 17th August

Majīd Kana, a founder member of Haras,¹ was hanged on 25th September. In the following week most of Baghdad's mandubīn and nationalist leaders were either arrested, exiled or escaped to the Euphrates area.² It was a serious blow to the 'movement' but by no means fatal.

Those Mawluds had little to do with the birth of the Prophet or the 'martyrdom' of his grandson. They were intended and organized for political ends; to enhance Shi'i-Sunni unity and to agitate the public to demand independence. From early May to mid-August they were held regularly every evening. They were organized by Haras of whom the authorities identified 4 prominent organizers; Timman, Dāoud, Bāzirkān and Baṣīr, but were attended by a large number of Shi'i and Sunni alike. On several occasions they ended in violent clashes with the police; several arrests were made and one death was reported. The Mawluds also took place in Mosul and the Ta'ziyah in Karbalā and Najaf. In each meeting slogans were uttered against the Mandate and the 'Committee of ex-Deputies', after its formation, 'long live 'Abd Allah, Shīrāzi and full Arab independence' also dominated.³

'Isa 'Abd al Qādir, an Administration employee was the first to be arrested because of an 'inflammatory' poem in which he pointed out that the Iraqis were humiliated because they were unjustifiably divided into religious sects and he called for unity:⁴

تفرقنا لموانع واختلافنا فاصبحنا جميعا صاهرينا
نما ابناء دجله غير عرب كابناء الفرات موحدينا
نكل قائل ويقول: يا من الله غير رب العالمينا

Jawāhri advocated Moslem-Christian unity for the revival of the Arabs.⁵

وقد خبروني ان في الشرق وحده كنا نسه ندعو فتبكي الجوامع
وقد خبروني ان للعرب نهضة بشائر تدلحلت لها وظلايع

1. Hassani, op. cit., p.57

2. Among those arrested were: 'Arif Suwaīdi, al Khalīl (Mandub), Nuri Fetāh, Jādirji, Daftari and his son Mahmud, Jalāl Bābān and others. F.O.371/5080, M.P., A.I., No.35, 28th August 1920, Para 698.

3. F.O.371/5076-5081, M.P., A.I. No.20, dated 15th May to No.33, dated 21st August, 1920

4. M.'A. Kemāl al Dīn, Al Thawra ..., op. cit., pp.342-3

5. M.M. al Jawāhiri, Dīwān al Jawāhiri, Vol.2, (Ṣāīda, 1967), p.189

Basīr's poems in the Mawluds were a renewed expression of the Arab intelligentsia's dilemma. On the 30th May he hailed 'science' which endowed the West and might revive the East. In a sad tune, he expressed his disappointment with the West who 'betrayed' its civilization and principles and revealed its oppressive essence, and revealed that the aim of Mawluds was to incite the people to rise:¹

يا علم عشت وعشت فحضرك راق لتعيد شمس الشرق لا شراق
 نيات أهل الغرب ظل حضارة ضربت على القيوت أي رواق
 لكنهم كفروا بنعمت التي جعلت ملجوا في عي وشقاق
 علمتهم ان ينقذوا ويحرروا ... لكنهم جلبوا على استرقاق
 خطب تنز الشعب هاتفه به ليهب حبه نامض سباق
 Basīr accused the West of ingratitude because it gained its civilized 'virtues' from the Arabs but did not 'liberate' them.²

لو أنصرك لحررت لانهم ربحوا فضيلتهم بظل لواكا
 (d) The Political and Organizational links between the Nationalists and the Shi'i and Tribal Leaders of the Mid-Euphrates:³

For almost a decade Iraqi nationalists of the large towns had been gradually becoming aware of the necessity of closer links with the Iraqi tribes, while socio-political conditions and relative spread of education made some tribal leaders aware that their agrarian problems were becoming part of overall national politics. Thus the first signs of co-ordination occurred during 1910-1914, when Tālib established contacts with some leaders of the mid-Euphrates. Kāṭi' al 'Awādi (sheikh) and Sa'īd Kamāl al Dīn (teacher) considered the 1920 movement as a continuation of that which started earlier by Tālib. Al Shahrīstāni argued that the 'movement' started with the demand of a constitutional rule for Persia and Turkey. 'When the Turks began to oppress the Arabs, we had to defend Arab rights'.⁴ In 1914, the Shāmiyah sheikhs contacted the Sherif Hussein and expressed their desire for an independent Arab state.⁵ The period between 1914 to 1918 was a time of uncertainty. After that date the British extended their direct rule over the area and applied their policy of taxation and land settlement. Such a policy helped the widespread

1. M.A. Kamāl al Dīn, op. cit., p.328

2. R. Baṭi, Al Adab al 'Asri fi al 'Irāq al 'Arabi, (Cairo, 1923), Vol.2, p.96

3. This part has drawn largely on the works of Basīr, Fir'on, Hassani and Yāsiri, listed in bibliography.

4. M. al Fir'on, op. cit., Vol.2, pp.557-8, 567-8, 553-4. Letters from 'Awādi, Kamāl al Dīn and Shahrīstāni.

5. C.O.696/1, Admin Rpt. Shāmiyah and Najaf, 1918, p.67

resentment and renewed tendency to identify with the nationalists. In early 1919, the Referendum disclosed the existence of 'nationalist' feelings among the tribes of Rumaithah, Samawah, Kufah, Shamiyah and Najaf. In February 1919, al Haras was formed in Baghdad and through the efforts of its Shi'i members, it was able to establish political cells in nearly every town of the area. Those cells included young men of intellect and dedication. Some of them had social influence. It seems that this area had a weak spot for poets: 'Abd al Maṭalib al Hilli organized tribal contacts for Ṭalib before the war, and after that it was al Shabibi brothers, Baṣīr, abu al Maḥāsin, Sharqī, Najafī, Sa'd Ṣālīḥ and Bāqir al Hilli who led the new nationalist wave. Haras was also able to gain the direct support of some tribal leaders ('Awādi and 'Awād) and influential Sayids like Zuwaīn.

'Ulum contacted Baghdad in mid-1918 and explained the situation to Ṣadr, Khālīsī and abu Timman. It was decided that Shīrāzī's aid would be important if he moved to Karbalā', which he did. Shīrāzī and Riḍā's arrival gave the 'movement' a strong backing. However, Shīrāzī's influence was to weaken the 'nationalist' character of the movement and to stamp it with Islamic and anti-British features. Nationalists and Islamists agreed on a common programme which could be summed up in 'the complete independence of Iraq and a son of Hussein as its constitutional king'. This common platform allowed a unity to the extent of eradicating the dividing line as, for instance, happened in Karbalā'.

In January-February 1920, all the members of the Shāmiyah-Najaf Council resigned their posts and made it clear that they wanted a final decision on Iraq's independence. At the same time 'Abd al Ghani Kubba and abu Timman tendered their resignation from the Baghdad Council. This indicated an advance since the Referendum in bringing together the political tactics of the various sections of the movement. The collective resignation disclosed that the movement was involving a larger number of the area's leaders.

In March 1920, the Iraqi Conference of Damascus declared the independence of Iraq. A large number of mudbatas were signed by 'most' of the leaders of the area supporting the Damascus proclamation. The declaration was sent to Hijaz and

Syria by April 1920.

On the first of Sha'ban 1338 (20th April 1920) a very large meeting was held in Najaf. It included 'Uloom, Jazā'iri, Jawāhir (mujtahids), Awādi, Sikar, Muḥammad 'Abṭān, 'Alwān Ḥāj Sa'dun, 'Awād, Sha'lān al Jum, Sulmān al Ḍāhir, laftah Shamkhi, Wadāi al 'Aṭiya, Mujbil al Far'un (tribal sheikhs), Sayid Nur, Mukawṭr, Zuwaīn, abu Ṭabīkh, 'Alwān al Yāsiri (Sayids) and Shallāsh (Najaf).¹ They decided to send Zuwaīn and Shallāsh to discuss the political situation in Baghdad, and on the 22nd April a large meeting was held in Baghdad. Apart from the Euphrates delegates, it was attended by Suwaīdi, Ṣadr, Naqshabandi, Bāzirkān, abu Timman, Rif'at Jādirji, al Dāoud, al Nā'ib, al Daftari, B. Shabībi, Bābān, Ṣādiq Ḥibba, Ṣādiq al Sharibanli.² They agreed to coordinate their efforts and to intensify their activities. The Baghdadi nationalists decided to send abu Timman to study the situation on the Euphrates. He arrived on the first day of May and held a meeting with the Euphrates leaders mentioned above, and others including Sha'lān abu al Jun and Ghathīth al Ḥarijān.

On the 3rd May, Timman accompanied by a number of Shāmiyah, Najaf and Rumaithah leaders held a 'very secret meeting' in Karbalā' over which Shīrāzi himself presided. They informed him of their common aims and future plans. Shīrāzi blessed their alliance and its aims, but he insisted on peaceful methods. They assured him that this was their intention but pointed out that 'revolution' might prove to be a necessity. Shīrāzi was reluctant to approve: 'the British are strong, Iraqi lives are dear and law and order are important'. The leaders assured him of their unity, potential, and ability to preserve order. Confronted with such persistence, he replied 'If those are your intentions and promises, then may God be on your side'.³ This meeting was highly significant; it was the official ratification of the nationalist-Shi'i-tribal alliance. To strengthen the organizational links, Bāqir al Shabībi was appointed as correspondent between Shīrāzi and 'Baghdad', Raḥum al Ḍalimi (sheikh) was assigned to be the link between Shīrāzi and Rumaithah (abu al Jun and Ḥarijān):

1. Henceforward I will refer to these as leaders of Euphrates.

2. Henceforward I will refer to these as the Nationalists.

3. Hassani, *op. cit.*, pp.95-7. In this meeting several groups were represented, the nationalists from Baghdad and Karbalā', the Sayids, the Mujtahids of Najaf and Karbalā', the tribal sheikhs of Bani Hassan, Fetlah, Rumaithah and Samāwah.

On May 9th a large meeting of nationalists assembled in Baghdad, in which abu Timman reported the outcome of his visit and assured the nationalists of Shi'i-tribal support. The meeting decided to step up the agitation and to organize Mawluds. These were attended by some of the Euphrates leaders.¹ These meetings were soon imitated in Karbalā', Hillah, Najaf and Mosul. On the 26th May a large Mawlid at Hayder Khānnah 'elected' the 15 Manudhīn to represent Baghdad and Kādhimāin. A letter was sent by abu Timman, and behalf of the Mandubīn, to Shīrāzi informing him of the development and requesting wide support. Shīrāzi came openly to support the Mandubīn and wrote several letters to tribal sheikhs:

'Your Moslem bretheren in Baghdad, Khadhimain, Najaf, Karbala ... have agreed and united and arranged peaceful demonstrations asking their legal rights as regards the independence of Iraq ... it is now the duty of every Moslem to unite ... every district and place should sent their demands to Baghdad'.²

The effect of this support was profound; on the 4th June, Karbalā' 'elected' its Mandubīn. They were 'Abd al Hussein (al Shīrāzi), Muḥammad al Khālīṣī, Muḥammad 'Ali Baḥr al 'Ulum, Ṣadr al Dīn al Māzindrāni, (mujtahid), 'Abd al Wahāb al Wahb, Muḥsin abu al Maḥāsin (Ḥaras) and 'Umar Ḥāj 'Alwān (sheikh). The maḍbaṭa was signed by 95 persons, including Shīrāzi (dated 16th Ramaḍān 1338, 4th June 1920).³ On the 6th June, Najaf and Shāmiyah 'elected' their Manudbīn. They were Jawād al Jawāhir, 'Abd al Karīm al Jazā'iri (mujtahids), 'Abd al Ridā al Rādi, Shallāsh' (merchants), Nur and 'Alwān 'Abbās (Sayids). The maḍbaṭa was signed by 120 notables including al Iṣfahāni (dated 18th Ramaḍān 1338, 6th June 1920).⁴ Both maḍbaṭas of Karbalā' and Najaf assigned the Mandubīn 'to represent us before the Government of Occupation ... to demand the independence of Iraq with no foreign intervention ... to form an Arab state led by a Moslem and Arab constitutional king'.

The Mandubīn of Najaf met on the 8th June and drafted a memorandum to the Civil Commissioner; they asked to meet him to discuss the demands of 'all people of Najaf and Shāmiyah'.

1. F.O.371/5076. M.P., A.I., No.21, 22nd May 1920, Para. 386.

2. F.O.371/5229/E.10430. Copy of letter to Haji Mukhif (dated 10 Ramadan - 29 May).

3. Khālīṣī Papers. Copy of the maḍbaṭa.

4. Original copy at H. Sha'bān Library in Najaf.

'First - The establishment of an Iraqi Assembly, elected by the people, to meet in Baghdad with the task of forming an Arab Government, completely independent of any foreign influence and headed by a Moslem Arab king.

Second - the lifting of all restrictions on the communication of the Iraqi Arab people with other nations.

Third - Freedom of Press, meetings and parties all over Iraq.¹

The memorandum was signed by the six Mandubīn. In Karbalā' a similar maḍbaṭa was sent to the Civil Commissioner through the Political Officer.²

Rahum al Dalimi left immediately for Rumaithēh. He met its tribal leaders, prominent among them al Jun and Ḥarjān, and acquainted them with the decision of Najaf and Karbalā' Mandubīn. He handed them the previously mentioned letter of Shirazi calling on Iraqis to elect their representatives. The leaders of Rumaithēh took a significant step; they wrote a maḍbaṭa to the six Mandubīn of Najaf and Shāmiyah requesting them to represent Rumaithēh also:

'We the undersigned, Leaders of Rumaithēh, chief of its tribes and representative of its public opinion ... entrusted you to deputy us in front of the Government of Occupation, in demanding the achievement of the absolute independence of the country and /the rejection/ of any form of foreign intervention ... We are prepared to support you in every possible way ...'.³

Wilson who, most likely, thought that a reply would amount to a dangerous official recognition, did not answer. During the period between 8th June and the 30th, the Mandubīn of Najaf, Shamiyah and Karbala persisted in futile attempts to meet the Civil Commissioner. In Najaf-Shamiyah, the Political Officer met the Mandubīn several times but told them that 'it was beyond his authority to discuss such important questions'.⁴

On June 20th a large gathering in Ḥillah was preparing to 'elect' its Mandubīn. The Assistant Political Officer sent his deputy, Khayri al Hindāwi, to order the crowd to disperse. Once there, Hindāwi, excited the public by reciting some of his own militant and nationalistic poetry. He called for Moslem, Christian and Jewish unity. He informed the crowd that the British had broken their promises.

1. Fir'on, op. cit., pp.111-5. Compare it with Baghdad's demands, p.365.

2. Original copy at Sa'id K māi al Dīn Library at Karbalā'.

3. Original Copy at H. Sha'bān library at Najaf.

4. Fir'on gives a detailed account of these frustrating negotiations, pp.1-9-17, 166-71.

Only 'violence' argued Hindāwi, could bring about independence and a 'son of Hussein' to Iraq.¹

The authorities were losing patience at the continual demonstrations, mawluds and public attack on the Government. On June 21st, Hindāwi, Ra'ouf al Amīn (ringleader of Haras) and others were arrested in Hillah and deported to Hījam. Next day, troops arrived at Karbalā' and its Political Officer made it clear to Shīrāzi that he intended to restore law and order and arrest all 'villains'. Shīrāzi wrote back protesting that the P.O. had, on several occasions, declined to visit him or see the Karbalā' Mandubīn. Nevertheless, Shīrāzi re-invited the P.O. and warned him that if he used force against 'the country's demands', then the P.O. 'and his like will bear the responsibility of bloodshed'.²

Instead of accepting the 'invitation', the Political Officer ordered the arrest of 12 persons from Karbalā' including Ridā al Shīrāzi, Shahrīstāni, 'Ulum and 'Umar 'Alwān. All of them - except Shahrīstāni because of his illness - were deported. The arrest and deporation of Ridā and others raised a storm of political protest; meetings were held, petitions were raised and demonstrations continued stronger than before. The leaders of Shāmiyah sent a petition (dated 28th June) to the P.O. requesting the immediate release of Ridā and his brothers 'so that people will not depart from peaceful demands to something else'.³ Karbalā's nationalists wrote to Shīrāzi consoling him and asking for his instructions.⁴

On June 29th, the leaders of Shāmiyah-Najaf sent an important message to the Baghdadi Mandubīn. They informed them of the arrests and that the authorities were using force against 'peaceful people demanding their independence'. The letter recognized the Baghdad Mandubīn as the 'deputies and representatives of the nation'. The letter insinuated that violence was the only way to

1. 'A. al Khāqāni, Shu'ra' al Ghiri, Vol.7, (Najaf, 1955), pp.173-93.

ليت شعري هل مبرنا يوماً

دعوي وحلقى تحليقاً

وقتل القوم اهلنا الوعد والعهد

واتذنيهم رأياً ونكراً سدياً

دامضربهم عزماً وبأساً شديداً

دجهاراً وعانقي البطريقاً

تبلي قبله الوداد انا هو

2. M. 'A. Kemāl al Dīn, Al Thawra al Irāqiya al Kubra, (Baghdad, 1971), pp.241-3

3. Hassani, op. cit., p.110

4. Fir'on, op. cit., p.174. Signed by Sa'id and Husseīn Kemāl al Dīn, Shabībī, al Sāfi, Sa'd Šāliḥ.

achieve Iraq's independence.¹

The same leaders sent a similar message to the tribal sheikhs of Rumaithah informing them of Ridā's arrest and requesting their solidarity for a 'peaceful campaign' to secure his release and Iraq's independence. If that failed then 'al Sayfu Aşdaq min al Kutubi'.² On the same day, Major Daly of Dīwāniyah ordered the arrest of abu al Jun which was carried out by Lieut. Hyatt. On receiving the news, Harjān led al Dawālim section to Bani Hujāim and freed abu al Jun by force. The uprising had started.

II The Characters and Features of the Uprising

The actual events of the uprising; its military details and accompanying political events have been the subject of a wide range of research and writing. It is the character of the uprising which is still an open question and a focus of intellectual and historical interest. I propose therefore to give a short account of the uprising, emphasising the points which could help to explain its nature more fully. Secondly, I will summarise the views of several writers on the uprising. The discussion will be concluded by my own view of its character.

(a) A Summary of the Events of the Uprising: The detention of Sha'lān abu al Jun and his subsequent release was the straw which broke the camel's back. This arrest was claimed to be the result of a dispute over an agricultural loan.³ However there are official indications which suggest that such an action was politically motivated.

'On the 2nd July tribes near Rumaithah, who have for some time past been incited by agitators from Najaf to rebellion, attacked the Government building at Rumaithah, killed Arab guard, and forcibly released Sheikh, who had been imprisoned with my approval on previous day for inciting his people to rebel'.⁴

Churchill fully accepted such a notion and gave it as an official explanation to the House of Commons, and added that 'the rising appears to be local in character'.⁵

The first attack on Rumaithah by al Dawālim was to free their Sheikh. But the

1. Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.120-1

2. Fir'on, op. cit., pp.181-3

3. P.W. Ireland, op. cit., p.266

4. F.O.371/5227/E.7826. From C.C. Baghdad, dated 4th July, 1920, No.8042, to I.O.

5. Ibid., E.8279, dated 13th July 1920. Reply to Mr. Ormsby-Gore.

next day they started to attack the railroad around Samāwah, Rumaithah and al Khidir. On July 1st, 2nd and 3rd the additional British troops which were sent proved insufficient. On July 4th the tribes besieged Rumaithah garrison. On July 7th a major British attack to release the garrison was successfully repulsed by the tribes. Thus the garrison was completely isolated and the tribes were able to cut the railroad north and south of Rumaithah. A few days later the Samāwah tribes declared Jihād, attacked British trains, cut the railroads and besieged the town itself which was not relieved by the British until October 14th.

It seems clear that the spark of the uprising was a) politically motivated and b) not strictly local. Furthermore, it occurred before any fetwa was issued. The sheikhs of Shāmiyah-Najaf were still in the course of discussion when the news of Rumaithah-Samāwah was broken to them. They were divided and thus hesitant. The most important sheikhs of Khazā'il (Salman and Muhammad al 'Abṭān),¹ Fatlah (Mizhir al Far'un) and Bani Hassan ('Alwān Hāj Sa'dun) proposed more negotiations with the British. The 'lesser' sheikhs like Sikar (Fetlah), 'Umrān Hāj Sa'dun (Bani Hassan) and the sheikhs of small tribal sections like 'Awād ('Awābid-Fetlah), al Ghāzi (al Jarāh-Hassan), al 'Aṭiyah (Humydāt-Fetlah), Samāwi (Khafājaf-'Fetlah'), Jallub (Fetlah al Hindiyah) pressured for a quick and violent action. The Sayids on the whole, were militant, more especially Mukawṭer, Nur and Zuwa'in. They put strong pressure on the Shāmiyah-Najaf tribes.² The Shi'i Mujtahids were also hesitant and confused. On the 25th June Isfahāni telegraphed Wilson protesting against the arrests and assuring him that the movement was peaceful. But Isfahāni pointed out that the Government's measure would lead to worse consequences and requested Wilson to intervene and calm the situation.³ According to Iraqi writers, Wilson's reply was typical of his character, gentle but over-paternal; he described the Iraqis as lacking education and vulnerable to bad advice; he defended the

1. On 2nd November they surrendered to the Government, but were immediately granted a full pardon and released. al 'Irāq, 6th November 1920. Sikar was described by the Administration as 'Leader of rebel forces', al 'Irāq, 9th November.

2. This information was gathered from a 'thorough' reading of Fir'on, op. cit., pp.205-7, 252-7, 266-73; Hassani, op. cit., pp.113, 143-52 and Yāssiri, op. cit., pp.186-193, 196-200, 208, 218-9.

3. Hassani, op. cit., pp.106-7

arrest and promised nothing.¹ On the 8th July, Isfahāni wrote two letters. The first was addressed to Shāmiyah and Rumaithēh leaders. He explicitly stated that clashes 'were against the common good', he asked them to stop hostilities and adopt peaceful methods'.² His second letter was addressed to Wilson in which he assured him of friendship with the 'Great Government'. However he defended the leaders of Rumaithēh and Karbalā' and asked Wilson, for the second time, to relax his measures.³

Shīrāzi appointed Shahrīstāni and Khurāssāni to go to Baghdad to explain to Wilson the peaceful character of the movement and to urge more restraint. They were unable to see Wilson and returned to Karbalā'.⁴ Shīrāzi issued a fetwa allowing the Iraqis to use 'defensive force' against the Government.⁵ He was angry at the hesitance of Shāmiyah tribes to defend the Rumaithēh tribes.⁶ By the 10th July more small tribes and sheikhs were taking military action against the Administration. In many tribes there occurred clashes over this issue and sometimes they assumed violent character. For instance, Sikar and 'Umran Hāj Sa'dun took over the leadership of the Fetlah and Bani Hassan respectively and Sa'dun al Rasan and Kāṭi' al 'Awādi killed the pro-British predominant sheikh 'Ulwan al Juḥālī and took over the leadership of 'Afaj and Dagḥarah tribes. In Ḥillah several clashes between different factions of one tribe or confederation were caused by the same issue.⁷

On July 7th a meeting took place in the Mudīf of Marzuq al 'Awād and was attended by Nur and 'Alwān al Yāsiri, Muḥsin abu Ṭabīkh, 'Abd al Wāḥid Sikar, Mujbel al Far'oun (Fetlah), 'Alwān al Hāj Sa'dun (Bani Hassan), Salṃān al Dāḥir,

1. Ibid., pp.107-8, dated 2nd July.

2. Copy at H. Sha'ban Library (Najaf), dated 21 Shawal.1338.

3. Hassani, op. cit., pp.109-10

4. Ibid., p.116; Letter from Shahrīstāni to Hassani.

5. Ibid., pp.105-6. It is important to observe that not a single important mujtahid in Najaf or Karbala supported this Fetwa.

6. Yassiri, op. cit., p.193

7. For instance, Shukhair al Haymuṣ led an inter-tribal coup in Albu Sulṭān against 'Adai al Jeryān, its paramount sheikh.(i) The smaller sections of Fetlah like Ibrāhīm, albu Jāssim, albu Musa, Kurīt, Ṭufaīl, Khafāja took over from al Khazā'il.(ii) Similar action took place in Afaj.(iii)

(i) Fir'on, op. cit., pp.267-75

(ii) Hassani, op. cit., pp.148-52

(iii) Fir'on, op. cit., pp.255-6

Muhammad al 'Abtān (al Khaza'il). The British were represented by Captain Mann of Shāmiyah. They submitted to him their demands which were, al Istiqlāl al Tām for Iraq, the termination of fighting around Rumaithah, the evacuation of all British military and political Officers from the Euphrates and the release of all detainees in Hillah and Karbalā', especially of Mirza Ridā al Shīrāzi.¹

On July 11th Jihād was declared in al Mishkhāb. Bani Hassan led by 'Umrān moved towards Kufah and the Shāmiyah's Fetlah attacked Kifil and started to move towards Hillah.² The latter part of July witnessed the most violent operations with considerable setbacks to the British. Troops were sent from Dīwāniyah to release the Rumaithah garrison. On July 18th and in an area called al 'Ardīāt the tribes led by abu Jun engaged the advancing troops. After severe fighting with considerable losses on both sides Rumaithah was occupied on July 20th.³ However, it was clear that the tribal resistance was so stiff that the British decided to evacuate the town on the day after its occupation. Their retreat was made extremely difficult by continuous raids by the tribes.⁴

The Civil Commissioner explained his persistence in sending columns to that area:

'Troops at Rumaithah have suffered heavy casualties and detachment sent in relief has suffered severely ... Situation in Shamiyah division is delicate and it is feared that control of Middle Euphrates will be lost unless a substantial success can be obtained at Rumaithah'.⁵

Major Young minuted:

'This telegram should be read in conjunction with Baghdad telegram No.7825 of the 28th June in which A. Wilson reported that "revenue is coming in regularly and situation is now once more practically normal on the Mid-Euphrates". Colonel Gordon Walker tells me that the Rumaithah trouble arose entirely out of the refusal of tribal elements to pay revenue in that district'.⁶

On July 23rd the British despatched a large and strong relief column to reoccupy Kifil. The force moved from Hillah and was confronted in an area called al Rustamiyah by the insurgent tribes. They were composed of Fetlah al

1. Al Yāsiri, op. cit., pp.193-6; Hassani, op. cit., pp.115-7

2. Ibid., pp.144-5

3. al 'Irāq, No.45, 23rd July 1920

4. al 'Irāq, No.47, 26th July 1920

5. F.O.371/5227/E.8268. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O., dated 8th July 1920, No.5370

6. Ibid.

Hindiyah (Jallub), al Jabour, albu Sulṭān (both led by Haīmuṣ) and al 'Awābid ('Awād). The tribes led by Sikar scored a 'substantial success' over the British forces of whom only half were able to return to Ḥillah. The retreat, according to Wilson, 'cost us 180 killed, 60 wounded, and about 160 were taken prisoners, with heavy loss of transport-vehicles and animals, They were not ill-treated in captivity, and of the 79 British prisoners only 1 died in Arab hands'.¹

The Arabs' good treatment of prisoners of war was confirmed by General Haldane himself in a telegram to the War Office.² Haldane wrote: 'This unfortunate affair could not have occurred at a more inopportune moment'.³ Miss Bell described the psychological aspect of the defeat: 'Another episode like that of the Manchester would bring the Tigris tribes out immediately below Baghdad'.⁴

This incident was bound to generate grave consequences. By discrediting the British power, practically the whole of the Mid-Euphrates rose. Subsequently the British had to evacuate Musaiyib and the Hindiyah Barrage. A withdrawal of British troops from Dīwāniyah to Ḥillah was deemed necessary. On 6th August, Karbalā' declared Jihād and was evacuated by the British. An Arab Administration was established with Sayid Muḥsin abu Ṭabīkh as Mutaṣarrif.⁵ In early August Sayid Hādi Mukawṭer and his followers were able to impose their power in al Khidīr, Gharāf and Shaṭrah.⁶ When the British evacuated Karbalā' the Mandubīn took over its administration. A committee for that purpose was formed of Khurāssāni, Kāshāni, son of Shīrāzi and Shahrīstāni. In September some Baghdadis arrived and Bāzirkān raised the Arab flag (of Hijaz) over Karbalā'.⁷

On the 13th August Wilson reported attacks on British Officials in Tal'afar, Arbīl, Ramādi and the evacuation of Officials from Qal'at Sikar, Ḥai and Shaṭrah. 'Situation at Samawah threatening'.⁸ In mid August, the army reoccupied Musaiyb

1. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., p.279

2. F.O.371/5079. From G.O.C. Baghdad to W.O., dated 21st September 1920, No.6056.

3. Sir Aylmer Haldane, op. cit., p.96

4. Lady Bell (ed), op. cit., Vol.II, p.494

5. Fir'on, op. cit., pp.247-8

6. Ḥassani, op. cit., pp.117-20

7. Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.156, 191-4

8. F.O.371/5229/E.10167, No.9571. (Curzon minuted on this too. But what a reflection on the Administration that has led us to this plight, Ibid., 18th August, 1920)

(12th) and Hindiyyah (13th). But on the 8th August the uprising had begun in Diyāla Division. The first initiative was taken by al Karkhiyah tribe and albu Hayāza¹ (led by Muḥammad abu Khushaīm) who raided Maḥrut Revenue Office, but it soon expanded to the whole Division. On the 12th August Diltāwah was evacuated and the next day Ba'qubah was relinquished by British troops. The two tribes were agitated by Naqshabandī who, in fact, belonged to the second tribe. In Ba'qubah an Arab Administration was formed and led by Sa'īd Sārah, Ḥabīb al 'Aydarousi, Maḥmoud Metwali (Ḥākim) and Amīn Zaki (all were members of Haras, Zaki was an ex-Officer). Another ex-officer, Ḥussein 'Alī, was appointed in charge of the police and he raised the Arab flag there.¹

On the 13th August Shahrabān was captured by the insurgent tribes. A provisional Arab Government was set up. Qizil Ribāṭ and Khānaqīn fell on the 14th August to the Kurdish Dilo tribe. On the 26th August Kifri (in Kirkuk Division) fell to the tribes. In Mandali a local government was formed but it took over the control of the town in a bloodless manner. The rising in Diyāla was of special importance because it meant a further pressure on Baghdad and the cutting of communications with Persia.

The Civil Commissioner reported the further outbreaks at Ba'qubah, Kifri and Kirkuk.² He considered evacuation of Mosul 'may shortly become necessary. Revolution is no longer political but anarchic'.³ This telegram was considered by the higher authorities in London as 'the most serious we have yet received ... especially as regards the evacuation of Mosul, now, apparently again a possibility'.⁴ Tilley minuted the following:

'The possibility of associating some Arab leader at once with the Government might be considered, even without waiting for Sir Percy Cox; but he must be somebody from within Mesopotamia not called in from outside'.⁵

On the 18th August, Wilson reported the killings of Shahrabān.⁶ Next day he reported that:

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1. Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.234-40; Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.172-3; Ḥassani, op. cit., pp.174-80
 2. F.O.371/5229/E.10175. From C.C. Baghdad dated 18th August 1920
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid., dated 19th August
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid. E.10175, From C.C. Baghdad, No.9949, dated 18th August 1920

'Women and children are leaving Kirkuk on August 19th. Arrangements have been made for evacuation when necessary, of Arbil, Sulaimani and Kirkuk. Ana /in Dulaīm/ has been evacuated and British will probably have to leave Hit shortly'.¹

The situation was considered so serious that British banks were suggesting burning their Indian currency.²

The Political Officer of Diyāla wrote:

'The whole of the agitation came from Baghdad where ... Sadr and ... Suwaidi made this promise their special province ... Among the Sunnis al Suwaidi had a considerable reputation, which he had gained during Turkish times by his vigorous opposition to Turkish oppression, while al Sadr made a religious appeal to the Shi'ah ...'.³

The 'agitation' was directed at the two prominent 'moderate' sheikhs Ḥabīb al Khaizirān of the 'Azzah tribe and Ḥamīd al Ḥassan of Bani Tamīm. The Political Officer went on to describe the situation in the following way:

'Ba'qubah has always been anti-British; Shahrabah had a small but influential clique of seditionists who had been for some time in touch with the Baghdad extremists, while Deltawah with its preponderance of Shi'ahs was from the beginning completely under the influence of Muhammad al Sadr. In Mandali the position was somewhat different ... the revolt in Mandali was purely the work of the townspeople while the tribes remained absolutely aloof. In consequence there was no looting; the temporary Government, which was set up, took over charge in orderly fashion giving receipts for the Treasury money, and there were none of the disgraceful incidents, which marked the rising in other districts.'⁴

Qarah Tappah fell to the tribes on the 15th August. Tuz Khirmātu fell three days later. 'Kirkuk, on and from 17th was nervous and inclined to panic'.⁵

Kifri town was occupied by the tribes on the 26th August. The Political Officer of Kirkuk (Major Longrigg) recorded the following causes:

'(a) ... our military weakness ...

(b) Months of vigorous propaganda supervened on this realisation. It came from different sources (Asia Minor, Baghdad, Syria), and in different interests; but it united, strongly and persuasively to the simple tribal intelligence, upon certain main lines. Muslims were everywhere and victoriously uniting, and driving the Kafir from 'Iraq; to join the glorious rising was a religious duty.

1. F.O.371/5228/E.10109. From C.C. Baghdad, No.9990, dated 19th August 1920

2. F.O.371/5078. From the Eastern Bank Ltd., London, dated 23rd August 1920

3. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report, Diyalah Division 1920, p.2.

4. Ibid.

5. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report, Kirkuk Division 1920, p.8

'(c) /Tribal solidarity/ ...¹

The British gave Diyāla a priority in the 'pacification' process. On the 27th August a British force occupied Ba'qubah. Another force assisted by loyal tribes re-established the Administration's control over Kifri on the 18th August. The British re-occupied Qizil Ribāt on the 6th September and Shahrabān was re-taken two days later. Diltāwah's resistance faded by the 24th September, while Mandali provisional Government² continued as late as the 20th November. However it should be noticed that the first object was to re-open the line³ from Baghdad to the Persian frontier. The British column devoted itself primarily to this and only secondarily to the 'chastisement' of the tribes. It was reported:

'Further operations ... are necessary and are in progress on the left bank. On the right bank we depend on the 'Azzah whose Shaikh Habib /āl Khayzerān/ had the good sense to quit the insurgent cause early on favourable terms. For the time being he has been appointed A.P.O. Daltawah with the former A.P.O. as his adviser'.³

In July 1920 the Political Officer of Sāmarrā' reported tribal restlessness, 'I am sure that but for the efforts of Yusuf al Suwaidi and Saiyid Muhammad Sadr ... no trouble would have been experienced in the Southern part of the Division'.⁴ The tribes of Sāmarrā' demanded the following:

- '(a) An Arab Government to be established in Samarra ...
- (b) That all Political and Civil Officials and Staff should be handed over ...
- (c) All Government property in Samarra should be handed over to them /the attackers/.⁵

In the Dulaim Division previous to the rising the British had already in 1919 had to face raidings from Syria - by Iraqi officers helped by 'Aḡāidāt tribesmen. British withdrawal from albu Kamāl took place in May 1920 and shortage of troops led to evacuation of 'Ānah on the 5th August.⁶ A few days later Lt. Col. Leachman, Political Officer of Dulaim, was killed at Khān Nuqtah

1. Ibid., pp.6-7

2. The 'Government' was led by certain Iliās Agha, an adherent of Talib Pasha. 'He seems to have easily perverted the moderate Nationalism which he heard preached by Sayid Talib, into the most extreme form'. C.O.696/3. Admin Report, Diyālah, 1920, Appendix E.P.11.

3. S.A.303, Memo. Secret, No. 31323/3 dated 10th November 1920, E.B. Howell, Lieut. Col., P.S. to H.C. for Mesopotamia, p.4

4. C.O.696/3. Admin Report, Samarra Division, 1920, p.1

5. Ibid., p.2

6. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report, Dulaim Division 1920, p.1

by Dāri b. Dāhir, whose sons Sulmān and Khamīs were implicated. This led to practically a general rising of the Zoba'. 'For about a fortnight after this, affairs were very critical ... The detachments of troops at Fellujah and Ramadi were surrounded and for a while to some extent beleaguered'.¹ 'Ali al Sulīmān chief sheikh of the Dulaīm Confederation was obliged to leave the Dulaīm.² However after several military engagements, continued aerial bombardment of Dāri's place and strong assistance from 'Ali Sulīmān and Maḥruth al Hadhāl (Sheikh of 'Anizah) the situation eased. But in 'Ānah and from a point about 10 miles above Hīt, 'chaos continued to reign supreme'.³ It was acknowledged by the British that 'It is not easy to overestimate our obligation towards Ali al Sulaiman'.⁴

Mosul did not take an active part in the rising:

'The absence of co-operation between the various anti-British elements is also noteworthy ... The Syrian movement /āl 'Ahd/ failed, at the last moment to obtain any assistance from the Turks, while the rebellion in Southern Iraq produced extraordinarily little excitement here. The tribes possibly with the lesson of Tal 'Afar fresh in their memories, gave no particular trouble during that critical time ... while in Mosul itself the response to order from Baghdad which manifested itself in the election of the forty came too late to embarrass us seriously'.⁵

In fact the comparative tranquility of Mosul made possible the transfer of troops from that region to the Euphrates.⁶ It was pointed out that 'But for this entirely fortuitous support /from the Assyrians/ it is probable that the whole of Mosul Division would have been swamped in the wave of anarchy'.⁷

In Sulaīmāniyah no open outbreak was reported. This was attributed to 'the recollections of last year's events /the failure of Sheikh Maḥmūd's rising/, a good harvest and the vigorous administration of Major Soane'.⁸ On the 1st September the Surjis of 'Aqrah (Mosul) occupied Batasin in Arbīl. The British had to evacuate Rāwanduz which consequently was occupied by the Surji. 'The

1. S.A.303, Memo of E.B. Howell, op. cit., p.5

2. Ibid.; on Dāri see 'A.Ḥ. 'Alawji and 'A. Ḥijiya, Sheikh Dāri (Baghdad, 1968)

3. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report, Dulaīm 1920, p.2

4. S.A. Memo of E.B. Howell, p.5

5. C.O.696/3. Admin. Report, Mosul Division 1920, p.3

6. Memo of H.B. Howell, p.1

7. Ibid., p.2

8. Ibid., p.4

period from the 1st September to the 14th, when troops arrived in Arbil, and the Surchi were defeated by the Assyrians, was highly critical in Arbil town'.¹

The major arena of the rising was on the Mid-Euphrates. The British suffered another setback when on the 12th August they had to evacuate Qal'at Sikar under strong tribal pressure. This had an immediate effect upon the temper of the Lower Gharāf. Tribal movement into Shaṭrah was noticed, 'Sayid Abdul Mahdi /Ḥaras/ and Shaikh Mahan Khairullah were the moving spirits and they succeeded in getting the sworn support of the Qalat Sikar tribes for their plot'.² Their aim was to march on Nāṣiriya. Their success would have been assured as the garrison of Nāṣiriya consisted only of a company or two of native infantry. However Khaiyun foiled this attempt. He pledged his support only when Nāṣiriya should have fallen. His decision resulted in the Shaṭrah tribes taking up a neutral attitude for some days. However the A.P.O. ceased to have any authority and was virtually a prisoner in his own house. He (Bertram Thomas) wrote:

'Khaiyun, still my constant adviser, told me that so long as I remained in Shatrah the flag should be respected and the tribes would now move against Nasiriya. It was therefore worth while to hand on'.³

However, on the 25th August, matters were brought to a climax by the arrival of Mirza Muḥammad al Shīrāzi. 'This man had been moving down the Charaf preaching Jihad. The whole town rose to greet him'. The Assistant Political Officer had to leave Shatrah and that was made possible under the protection of Khaiyun.⁴ The importance of Khaiyun's attitude was not only in his protection of the British Officers in Shaṭrah but also in his persistent refusal to attack Nāṣiriya. In fact the Civil Commissioner had instructed the evacuation of Nāṣiriya; on the 2nd September he telegraphed:

'It has been necessary for A.P.O. to leave Suq owing to spread of Jihad, and it will probably be necessary to evacuate Samarra shortly. /G.C. in C.7 ... intends to evacuate Nasiriya as soon as he has extricated detachment ... and will concentrate all his forces on the Tigris'.⁵

1. Ibid., p.3

2. F.O.371/5231. Memo 27th August 1920; From A.P.O. Shatrah to C.C. Baghdad through P.O. Muntafiq Division.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. F.O.371/5229/E.10870, From C.C. Baghdad, 2nd September 1920

Suq al Shuyukh was evacuated on the 1st September. The causes of the rebellion in Suq were stated to be:

- (a) a desire to escape payment of the 1920 rice revenue.
- (b) A natural desire to escape from Government ...
- (d) Tribal policy imposed for, very largely, military reasons and carried beyond its logical conclusions.
- (e) A loose political agitation from the centres of Shi'ah obscurantism, which served as the excuse to set the match to the fire'.¹

The Civil Commissioner reported on the 27th August:

'Inability of our armed forces to obtain a striking military success at any point is encouraging our enemies ... Latest example is at Shatrah where active preaching of Jihad by emissaries from Najaf and Karbala backed by letters of new chief Mujtahid /al Iṣfahāni/ has at last roused tribesmen ... /Khayun/ found himself unable to check rising spread of fanaticism amongst his tribesmen'.²

Three days later Wilson reported 'trend of events is having unfavourable effect in Hammar Lake and on lower Euphrates'.³ When Qal'at Sikar fell, the leaders of the area held a meeting and concluded al Muṣīfi convention which included:

- 1. The demand of complete independence of Iraq and the election of 'Abd Allah as king.
- 2. The protection of useful Government institutions ...
- 3. Obedience of the Mujtahids ...
- 5. The formation of a local committee in each area under their control or even its affairs.

Among those who signed it were Muḥān Khair Allah, 'Abd al Mahdi, Khayun al 'Ubīd and others.⁴

After the Shāmiyah tribes had succeeded in defending Kifil and inflicting the 'Manchester' defeat on the British, they decided to move to Ḥillah. On the 27th July Tuwāirij was occupied by Bani Hassan and on the 27th and 28th there were minor attacks on Ḥillah. On the 30th July a big attack (estimated to be by 10,000) took place against Ḥillah. The attackers were composed of Bani Hassan, Fetlah and other Shāmiyah tribes. The British were able to defend Ḥillah and repulse the tribes. 'From the house when they realised that it had failed their cause began to decline. From this moment, though the leaders stood fast, the lesser men began to think of surrender ...'.⁵

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- 1. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report of Suq al Shuyukh District, 1921, p.1
 - 2. F.O.371/5229/E.10625. From C.C. Baghdad No.10384, dated 27th August 1920
 - 3. Ibid. E.10743, 30th August 1920
 - 4. Copy of al Mithaq at Sayid 'Abd al Mahdi al Muntafiki library in Baghdad.
 - 5. S.A.303. Memo. Lieut-Colonel E.B. Howell, p.6

The fiercest fighting took place in the Samāwah district. The movement there was led by abu al Jun, Ghithīth al Harjān and Sayid Hādi Mukawṭer (of Shinafiyah). The British had to evacuate al Khidīr on the 13th August. On the 28th August the tribes captured a defence vessel on the Euphrates, with all on board. On the 3rd September a British force attempted to evacuate Samāwah but was completely annihilated by the tribes. This was the third unsuccessful attempt. On the 22nd September a plane was shot down. A few days later the crew of the D.V. 'Greenfly' were forced to surrender to the tribes.

After the British counter-offensive Samāwah was reached by a relief column on the 14th October. Two days earlier Tuwaīrij was occupied. Immediately Karbalā' surrendered and Musaiyib followed suit. Kifil was occupied on the 14th October but the strong British column was still facing considerable opposition. Kufah was entered on the 17th and the garrison relieved after 92 days siege. This precipitated the surrender of Najaf.¹

Thus by mid October the collapse of the tribal rising was evident. It was in early August 1920 when the Civil Commissioner informed the India Office 'that a state of war exists throughout Mesopotamia'.² It was not until February 1920 that General Haldane was able to inform the War Office that military operations had ceased.³

After the elapse of a year a British Official analysed the causes of the outbreak. In the first place he pointed to the existence of a 'dual authority' situation in the Iraqi countryside. 'So lightly does Government rest on armed tribesmen, and so insecure are its foundations ... [that] the slightest weakening of Government is at once detected'.⁴ In conditions of this character it was hardly advisable to impose high taxation. 'The non-payment of taxation is popular amongst the people of all nations; it becomes

1. Ibid.

2. F.O.371/5229/E.10172. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. dated 9th August 1920

3. A. Haldane, A Soldier's Saga, (London, 1948), p.379

4. C.O.696/4. Admin. Report of Suq Al Shuyukh District 1921, p.56

almost a recreation where the tax-payer is the commander of an Army'.¹ He went on to elaborate on the attempt to 'arrest' the socio-political developments, 'there can be little doubt that the paramount shaikh if left to his own devices, quickly loses his paramountcy'. He argued that 'Tribesmen ... object to the imposition of autocratic rule'. More especially 'by one who is, in most cases their enemy and, in nearly all, covets some portion of their land'.² It is clear that the policy of restoring the power of the sheikh was opposed to the interests of the tribes; it runs contrary to the evolution of political institutions and cannot be successful in the long run.

'It has often been the proud boast of the British in Mesopotamia that, where the Turks divided up the tribes and kept them in perpetual warfare as the easiest means of controlling them, the British restored their cohesion and the patriarchal rule of their shaikhs.

This rule was so patriarchal ... that it was one of the causes of the rebellion. Patriarchs may have their place in the desert, but they are out of place amongst rice and date exporters'.³

(a) The Character of the Uprising: Because of its importance, impact and novelty, the Iraqi uprising has provoked various interpretations of its motives, forces and nature. The head of the British Administration, at the time of the events, maintained that it was a chaotic insurrection by anarchist tribes incited by Hashimite agents and fanatic 'ulemā'.⁴ Wilson's view, being one-sided, was bound to fall into self-contradictory arguments. On the 28th June he admitted some agrarian dissatisfaction, but hastened to assert 'we must look ... not to political changes for which there is no demand ... but to adequate land settlement ... and wise ... taxation'.⁵ Shatrah's Political Officer wrote:

'... disquiet is broadly speaking, agrarian and not primarily political. Nationalist activities there have been, and no one would underrate their seriousness, but ... The political minded made up of ... town intelligentsia, is ... five per cent of the population. In the tribes Nationalism is unknown ... The root cause of unrest is objection to taxation'.⁶

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.57

4. A.T. Wilson, op. cit., pp.273-6

5. F.O.371/5227/E.7725. No.7825 to I.O.

6. B. Thomas, op. cit., pp.93-4

Nevertheless, a month later Wilson wrote 'I do not think rebels have any agrarian grievances ... Were there any such grievances, area of disturbance would not be limited as now to Shia district within reach of Najaf and Karbala'.¹

This superficial separation of politics from economics, nationalism from taxation and land policy, is also clear in the writings of Iraqi Arab nationalists. Baṣīr, Ḥassanī and Fir'on consider the tribal sheikhs as ardent nationalists who sought nothing but the independence of Iraq.² Only Bāzirkān raised the importance of the 'economic' factor. He gave the credit of 'pure' nationalism to the Baghdadis and contemptuously referred to the tribal contribution as motivated by land and taxation problems and agitated by the 'Ulemā'.³

The essential defect which dominates most of the above-mentioned views is the unjustified separation between agrarian grievances and nationalism. It is my opinion that the rising was a primitive but genuine expression of nationalism. I have tried to show how deeply-rooted and justified were those grievances which the British occupation served to bring to a head. I suggested that without such agrarian grievances, the tribes would not have been so profoundly affected by the nationalist or religious appeals. Nevertheless, it is equally true that such hardships were, thanks to the British, taking an embryonic national structure and, consequently, expression. The changes in the socio-economic structure and the spread of education and communication were gradually bringing the country together and integrating the tribes into the society of Iraq. The successful, but counter productive, centralization policy of the British accelerated the process of integration. The Administration's taxation law and tribal policies produced wide resentment which was directed against the central Authority. Thus different Iraqi tribes were to co-ordinate their efforts, by-pass the inter-tribal conflict, and strike collectively against the Administration. Furthermore, they allied themselves with other forces who were striving for the liquidation of the British Administration, namely the nationalists and some Mujtahids.

1. F.O.371/5228/E.9849, dated July (29?) 1920

2. Fir'on, op. cit., p.24; Baṣīr, op. cit., pp. 51-4 ; Ḥassanī, op. cit., p.4

3. Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.14, 144-6, 170

I have tried to show that the nationalist-Shi'i-tribal alliance was genuine and effective. Most of the tribes had adopted the nationalists' aims of independence and a Hashimite king. The organizational and military links among the tribes were in evidence¹ and between tribes, nationalists and mujtahids were not loose, or meaningless. The actual fighting was the most tribal aspect of the uprising. Nevertheless, all British and Indian 'war prisoners' were handed over to the Arab Administration of Najaf.² Moreover no less than 15 ex-officers had left their towns and joined the fighting on the Euphrates and in Diyāla.³ They were either sent by Haras, volunteered individually or were living in the areas of the outbreak. Furthermore, the direct role of Suwaīdi and Ṣadr in Diyāla and Samarrā' was pointed out by the Authorities. In Karbalā' and Najaf the Mandubīn assumed authority once the British had withdrawn. In Ba'qubah, Mandali and Khālīs the town nationalists formed a provisional 'government'. The tribes who attacked Hillah were accompanied by Jazā'iri, Kāshāni and Shahrīstāni.⁴ Two newspapers were allowed by the 'local authorities' to be published in the area; al Istiqlāl and al Furāt, both of which were edited by Arab nationalists (Muḥammad 'Abd al Husseīn and B. al Shabībī). Both papers expressed not only Arab nationalist feelings but also a considerable understanding of the conflict in the British policy and the development in the area. Shabībī attacked the French invasion of Syria, and the British tacit approval, as an attempt to prevent Iraqi-Syrian unity.⁵ On the 30th July a leaflet issued in Najaf by Shabībī 'demanded' of every

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1. For instance the Rumaithah-Samawah links with the Najaf-Shāmiyah tribes. The attack on Hillah was a coordinated between several tribes who previously were on bad terms. Up to 1918 the conflict was unresolved over land between Fetlah, Abrāhīm, Himīdāt, al 'Awābid and Khafājah and other tribes. Yāsiri, op. cit., pp.69-72. In 1920 all those tribes and others together attacked Hillah. Y. Karkush al Hilli, Tārīkh al Hillah, (Najaf, =965), pp.-75-6
 2. Shallāsh was responsible for the prisoners. Letter from Iṣfahāni to Shallāsh. al Furāt No. 5, 2nd Muḥaram 1339 (16th September 1920).
 3. I was able to count the following: Shākir Maḥmūd, Husseīn 'Alwān, 'Abd al Raḥman Khadīr, Fuād al Madfa'i, Zaki Amīn, Ṭālīb al Jaddah, Jamāl Qubṭān, Maḥmūd Rāmīz, Ṭaha al Badri, Sāmi and Anwar al Naqshali, Ismā'īl Hājī Agha, Shākir al Qaraghoulī, Maḥmūd Sāmi, Sa'id Hāqī, Ibrāhīm Mahdī, 'Arīf Hikmet, Dāoud al Mikānīkī, Rashīd Shiblāwī, Husseīn 'Awnī, Ibrāhīm Adham. F.O.371/5080-1. M.P., A.I. No.33-7, dated 14th August to 14th September 1920; Bāzirkān, op. cit., pp.152, 158, 174; Baṣīr, op. cit., p.242, Ḥassanī, op. cit., p.132, Fir'on, op. cit., pp.136, 238
 4. Yāsiri, op. cit., p.218
 5. al Furāt, No.1, 21st Dhe Qa'da 1338 (21st August 1920)

tribal leader to 'educate' his tribesmen that the uprising was for al Istiqlāl, that Government property should be preserved and inter-tribal hatreds overcome.¹ Faisal al Mughair (the leader of Falujah uprising) was in correspondence with Suwaïdi and Shahrīstāni.²

Nevertheless, the 'primitive' form of nationalism was equally clear. The Fellāhīn never became members of a unified 'army of liberation'. One is often left with the impression that the tribal leaders were contented with the local independence of their areas; no serious attempt was made to attack, for instance, Baghdad.³ The tribes lacked a well organized coordination. Furthermore, the possible satisfaction by the British of the agrarian complaints was a major factor behind the hesitation and double-faced attitude of large numbers of sheikhs. Some of them refused to take part (Dāhir, Khazā'il, 'Adāy al Jariyān-albu Sultan), others involved half-heartedly (al 'Abtān, Khayun) and some concluded their separate peace with the Administration (Khayzārān). In short one could say that the underdeveloped socio-economic conditions of Iraq were bound to produce politically only a primitive nationalist 'revolution'.

There is another interpretation of the uprising. Nafeesi emphasised the Shi'i character of it and to stress his point, he quotes Hogarth who argued that the rising 'was mainly a Shi'ite affair, organized from Najaf and Karbala'.⁴ This argument reminds us of Wilson's views. However, it was Elie Kedourie who developed such a notion to its extreme:

'There was perhaps another factor which helped to make possible a momentary alliance between Shi'ah and Sunnis. When the prospect of independence appeared, the Shi'ah leaders hoped to be the masters of the country, and agreed to ally themselves to the Sunni who, as a minority, the Shi'as must have calculated, would never have the upper hand in an independent Mesopotamian state'.⁵

Moreover, Kedourie interprets the revolt as Shi'i-inspired and dominated separatist movement to wrest power from the Sunnis, both Ottoman and Arab.

1. In H. Sha'bān Library, Najaf.

2. F.O.371/5081. M.P., A.I. No.33, 14th August 1920 (Suwaïdi); M.'A. Kamāl al Dīn, op. cit., pp.254-5 (Letter from Shahrīstāni).

3. Nevertheless it might have been the British force, the failure of the Hillah attack, Khayun reluctant to attack Nāsirīyah, Khayzīrān's hesitance and failure at Falujah are the real reasons.

4. A.F. al Nafeesi, op. cit., p.247

5. E. Kedourie, England ..., op. cit., p.190. Compare this to Kedourie's argument quoted in page 48.

Therefore it was not only a regional happening, but also a sectarian one, aiming, according to Kedourie, for the establishment of a theocratic Shi'i state independent from the rest of Iraq.¹

Kedourie's argument is self contradictory, undocumented and, moreover, ill founded on two levels; reality and intellectual interpretation. It is positively clear that the so-called 'Shi'i Jihad' was directed against the British Administration, and not against the Iraqi Sunnah of whom a large section was taking part in the same 'Jihad'. The Shi'i-Sunni alliance, during that period, reached a peak of strength and harmony. Both were preaching a wider national unity to embrace the Iraqi Christians and Jews. Among the nationalist leadership (Haras), it is even inaccurate to refer to an alliance. It was a unity of 'enlightened' nationalists which lasted even after the elapse of the uprising and its aftermath.²

There is no evidence to support the claimed Shi'i 'calculation' for an independent state. Abundant data indicates the opposite. Iraqi Shi'ah who took part in the uprising, whether tribes or mujtahids, were persistent in their demand for a united Iraq and a Hashimite king.

The usage of the term Shi'ah is, to some extent, an unjustified over-generalization. The Shi'ah, like most other groups, is not an indivisible community. The Iraqi Shi'ah has been divided, in this work, into nationalists (considered as an organic part of Iraqi nationalists), tribes and fellāḥīn, Sayids (of Shāmiyah and Mishkhāb), notables and merchants, and mujtahids. It seems most likely that to Wilson, Hogarth and Nafeesi the term referred mainly to the mujtahids. Kedourie does not define his use of the term.

It is, of course, idle to underestimate the moral power of 'ulemā' amongst tribesmen; that the tribes do pay attention to their divines, who were instrumental in the agitation, is an established fact. Nevertheless, it is safe

1. E. Kedourie, 'Reflexions sur l'histoire du Royaume d'Irak (1921-1958)', Orient, No.11 (1959), pp.55-79. Cited by A. Vinogradov, 'The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: the Role of Tribes in National Politics', International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol.3, No.2, April 1972, pp.123-139

2. After the rising two nationalist parties were formed; al Waṭani and al Nahḍa. Both included Sunni and Shi'i members alike. Baṣīr, op. cit., pp.404-30

to say that such incitement cannot assume an effective influence unless the ground is prepared by the existence of actual grievances. It has been suggested that peasants' socio-political and agrarian conditions make it difficult for them to pass from passive recognition of wrongs to political participation in setting them right.¹ To suggest that the massive uprising of the Iraqi fellāḥīn was solely due to religious fetwa or nationalist propaganda² is, to say the least, a myopic view.³

Moreover, a review of the political development in Iraq between 1914 to 1921 would not fail to give the mujtahids' role its right and unexaggerated dimension. It would also expose the shallow view considering the Shi'ah as a monolithic group. In 1914 nearly all the 'ulemā' called for an anti-British Jihad; the tribes responded but with obvious mental reservation and practical reluctance. In 1915-1916, Najaf, Karbalā' and Ḥillah 'population' was rising against the Turks whereas some of the Shi'i mujtahids and intelligentsia were expressing regret at the downfall of the Ottomans. In May 1918, Najaf disturbances were carried against the will of the chief Mujtahid (Yazdi). Jazā'iri and 'Ullum enthusiasm did not convince the contented tribes to move against the Administration. In late 1918, the leaders of Shāmiyah-Najaf 'voted', during the Referendum, for an independent Iraq. This was done without the approval of Yazdi and, almost, against his indicative silence. The uprising began in Rumaithēh-Samāwah before Shīrāzi's fetwa was issued and in neglect of his persistent advice of an orderly and peaceful demand for independence. Shīrāzi's 'defensive force' fetwa and his pressure on the leaders of Shāmiyah-Najaf 'not to allow Rumaithēh to sink alone' had, apparently, no strong impact on 'Abṭān, 'Alwān al Sa'dun, Khayun and others. It 'influenced' other tribal leaders of different socio-political conditions and views.

1. T. Shanin (ed), op. cit., pp.14-15; E.R. Wolf, 'On Peasant Rebellions', op. cit., pp.1-2

2. G. Bell wrote 'It was this /nationalist/ propaganda which was the sole and only cause of the stirring up of revolt here'. G. Bell, Private Papers ..., Newcastle, letter dated 30th January 1921.

3. Major Young wrote 'I do not agree with Colonel Wilson that political changes will not provide the remedy. Colonel Gordon Walker, of Basrah, tells me that our repressive taxation, with no corresponding benefits given, is exceedingly unpopular with the Arab tribes ...'. F.O.371/5227/E.7725. Minute by H. Young on a telegram No.7825, from C.C. Baghdad, 28th June 1920.

Shīrāzi died on the 13th August, his son Ridā and al 'Ulum were exiled before that. Yet the movement went on uninterrupted.

Shīrāzi was succeeded by Iṣfahāni who publicly condemned violence and did not support Shīrāzi's fetwa to Jihad. On the 27th August he received an open letter from the Civil Commissioner which varied between threats and offers of peace.¹ Jazā'iri, Jawāhir, Rāḍi and Iṣfahāni favoured negotiating peace.² The nationalists (led by Shabībī) and the tribes led by Sikar, were advocating rejection of Wilson's offer and wrote several articles to that end. Iṣfahāni, under public pressure, wrote back to Wilson bitterly criticizing his Administration and its deeds. He concluded his letter by refusing negotiation.³ In the end it was the newly arrived British troops who 'convinced' the tribes to surrender their arms and not Iṣfahāni's dedication to peace.

The prominent Mujtahids who worked for the uprising had, with the exception of Ṣadr, more often than not displayed 'Ottomanist' tendencies. This fact contradicts the view that their movement was sectarian. Thus it is fair to conclude that Kedourie's assumptions are arbitrary and that many other accepted views on the rising should be reconsidered.

This work has referred to the distinguished role of the Iraqi Shi'i intelligentsia in the rise of Arab nationalism and the independence movement. It has been argued that such a role was made possible by a combination of their ethnic structure (Arabs but minority within Ottomanism) and their intellectual heritage (reason and tolerance). But it does not follow that the 'special role' should indicate a desire to a special state. Together with a rising elite of Sunnah and Christians, the Shi'ah intelligentsia were inspired by a vision of a united, independent state in which science and social progress could flourish. One could hardly expect that sectarianism would vanish miraculously in a society like Iraq of 1920. But those nationalists found in Islam a useful

1. al 'Irāq, No.77, 31st August 1920

2. Ḥassani, op. cit., p.125

3. Fir'on, op. cit., pp.358-9

and common umbrella, more especially when the British occupation had assisted in suppressing the growing distinction between Islam and nationalism. The Islam of the 1920 nationalists was, however, a political and not a theocratic one. Furthermore, it was, virtually, an 'Afghanist' Islam which advocated unity with Christians and Jews.¹ Muḥammad Ḥabīb al 'Ubaydi, summed up the intellectual combination of several trends interacting within the movement in an interesting poem. He swore by the Bible and Qurān that Iraq would never accept the Mandate. For 'Abd Allah the richest blood was shed, 'We did not betray the Turks but for the sake of independence'. Although he advocated Moslem unity, he affirmed that the Shi'ah would never accept Mandate.²

قسم بالقرآن والانبيل يس نرضى وصايد لقبيل
استهدوا يا اهل الثرى والثريا قد ابت شيخه الوصي وصيا
في سبيل استقلالنا نكشنا عهد اخوان لنا يوم ثرنا
كم دماءنا ومنهم سفدنا غير نجم استقلالنا ما رعدنا
لا تقل جفريه حنفيه لا تقل شافعيه زيديه
جمعتنا الشريعة الامديه هي تأبى الوصايد الفريديه

Different writers gave various accounts concerning the social nature of

the uprising. Most Iraqi Marxists attributed a large role to the 'Iraqi bourgeoisie'. This work contends that such a view has no strong basis³ and suggests that the movement was basically led by the town intelligentsia and the tribes. Kotalov, a Russian Marxist, argued that the rising was of the poor fellāḥīn against taxation, landlords and British rule.⁴ Others saw it as a movement led by the landed notables. If Kotalov meant that the poor peasants were the most affected by the events, then it is a self-evident argument. If he was, as is more possible, attributing the leadership of the rising to them, then his assumptions are in great need of proof. There is no evidence to

1. During the rising it was suggested to release the Indian Moslems who were captured by the tribes. 'Adwah opposed that arguing that the movement was nationalist and not Islamic.⁽ⁱ⁾ It seems that his opinion convinced the leaders of Najaf; Indians (88) and British (79) soldiers were released together. They were well treated.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

(i) Papers of 'Abd al Razaq 'Adwah in his family house (Hillah)

(ii) al Iraq, No.121, 22nd October 1920

2. I. al Wā'ilī, Al Shi'r al 'Irāqī fi Thawrat al 'Ashrīn, (Baghdad, 1960), pp.73-7

3. Supra, pp.212-6.

4. L. Kotalov, Thawrat al 'Ashrīn al Waṭaniya al Taḥurriya fi al 'Irāq. Arabic. trans. A.W. Karam (Baghdad, 1971). Originally a Ph.D. thesis, Moscow, 1958

suggest that the poor fellāḥīn had by-passed their leaders of small sheikhs, sarākīl or leaders of subdivisions. The only group of landed notables who allied themselves to the uprising were the Sayids. To most other landed notables the uprising was more often than not directed against their claims and represented a strong social challenge to their interests.

'In the Muntafiq Division the events of the /ūprising/ have resulted in driving every landlord into support of B. Government. Not only the Sa'dun, but merchants of the town who have invested their money in garden property and agricultural land have seen themselves dispossessed, to a lesser or greater extent, by the tribes in the name of Independence or Jihad. ... It is the cry of independence not that of Arab Government, which has made special appeal to the smaller shaikhs, the heads of sections. To them it holds out the hope of throwing off the yoke of the paramount shaikhs of the tribe, through whom administration has been conducted, and of dropping the burden of rent and taxation ...'.¹

Such a balanced evaluation finds ample evidence in the actual events of the uprising.

Massive and powerful British troops were finally able to put an end to the uprising. Haldane proudly declared that his troops had 'taught the tribesmen what it meant to cross swords with the British Empire'.² Cox arrived in Basrah on October 1st and Baghdad on the 11th. On October 23rd Abd al Rahman al Naqīb headed the first Iraqi Government which included Tālib, al 'Askari, Hisqāl and others.³

Nevertheless it was obvious that the situation was far from being durable.

The nationalist newspaper al Istiqlāl wrote:

'Lloyd George has declared that Sir Percy Cox was given wide latitude; this implies that the policy of /G.B./ in Iraq is not yet decided. Iraqi nation must therefore not hesitate to put forward her demands'.⁴

A few days later, al Istiqlāl argued that:

'Nothing material has changed; the nation wants a general amnesty, return of deportees, the repatriation of officers detained in Syria and elsewhere, and a great change in the Administration /replacement of Foreigners by Iraqis/. Arabic even is not yet the official language.'

1. F.O.371/6348/54. Intelligence Report No.4, 31st December 1921, Para.19-20.

2. A. Haldane, A Soldier's ..., op. cit., p.383

3. They were Muṣṭafa Allusi, 'Izzat Pasha (Kirkuk), Muḥammad Ṭabṭāba'i (Karbala'), 'Abd al Laṭīf Mandīl (Basrah), Muḥammad Fāḍil (Mosul). Another 12 notables and sheikhs were appointed as Ministers without portfolios.

4. Al Istiqlāl No, 17, December 1st 1920

It predicted another outbreak if 'no remedy is given'.¹ Al Istiqlāl
carried on its campaign and suggested that:

'Nothing in the nature of a national government yet exists, nor is there any proof that the British Government has altered a policy which was contrary to the wishes of the people. But the nationalists will win ... Iraqis must in the end gain a victory for the cause of nationalism'.²

Ḥamdi Bājhji published a disclaimer in which he declared that he 'would on no account take any appointment under the provisional Government'.³ The British Authorities explained his attitude as follows:

It 'reflects that of the Young Arab Party to which he belongs, although he cannot be said to be among the most unreasonable. ... he does not regard the present Government as standing for a national institution nor will he give it his allegiance ... Even Rashid Beg al Khojah /Mutassarraf of Baghdad/ has expressed a private disbelief in the 'sincerity of British Intentions'.

The report went on to conclude that 'Nothing but the development of Arab Administration can allay these doubts'.⁴

In fact the most 'nationalist' aspect of the 1920 uprising lay in the explanation by the British, both in Iraq and England, of its forces and aims. It was through this interpretation that a remedy was to be devised and implemented. Nevertheless, the British had attributed an exaggerated influence to the group which, in fact, had the minimum impact on the 'Euphrates rising' namely the Iraqi Officers of al 'Ahd. The essence of the new British policy was the adoption of Major Dickson's advice; the appointment 'to political posts only men of moderate views' and the suppression 'of the agents of the insurrection if or when found'.⁵

1. Ibid., No.18, 5th December 1920

2. Ibid., No.33, 19th January 1920

3. Ibid., 30th January 1921

4. F.O.371/6350/116. Mesopotamia Intelligence, No.6, 31st January 1920

5. H.R.P. Dickson's Papers, Oxford, D.77, Box 2A, File IV, p.18, 1921

CHAPTER XV

THE BRITISH-'MODERATE' NATIONALIST SOLUTION

Preface

In late 1914, A.T. Wilson wrote:

'I should like it accounced that Mesopotamia was to be annexed to India as a colony for India and Indians, that the Government of India would administer it and gradually bring under cultivation its vast unpopulated desert plains, peopling them with the martial races of the Punjab'.¹

Subsequent developments and events had proved that such a desire was never to be realised. It is beyond doubt that one of the prime reasons behind the failure of the annexation policies was the stiff resistance which the Iraqi nationalists had shown. G. Bell admitted that:

'No-one, not even /H.M.G./, would have thought of giving the Arabs such a free hand as we shall now give them - as a result of the rebellion'.²

A.S. Klieman argued that:

'... it can be said that the uprising was indeed revolutionary, because of its impact on the British policymaking apparatus'.³

The rising cost the British 906 killed, 2,476 missing and 671 wounded.⁴ To suppress it they had to inflict upon the Iraqis some 8,200 casualties.⁵ It cost the British Treasury much more than the Hijazi movement. Furthermore, in Britain itself the most strenuous demand for evacuation came with the rising and the mounting burden on the British. 'People began to wonder ... whether Mesopotamia was worth such an outlay'.⁶

Thus there are adequate proofs to indicate that the rising had largely contributed to the alteration of British policy. Nevertheless, it is equally

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1. I.O.L/P and S/IO, 3136/14, No.4717/14. A letter from A. Wilson to Col. C.E. Yates, M.P. 28 November 1914. Cited by H.A. Nakib, op. cit., p.75, also H. Young, op. cit., p.40
 2. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers (Newcastle), letter dated September 19, 1920
 3. A.S. Klieman, Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: the Cairo Conference of 1921, p.59
 4. F.O.371/5231/E.13302, dated 25 October 1920.
 5. F.O.371/5081, dated 16 November 1920.
 6. E. Moner, Britain's ..., op. cit., p.61

true that the movement had suffered a total military defeat. Had the British aim been wholeheartedly annexationist, they were capable of enforcing it. However, there is much evidence that annexation was not the strategic British aim:

'I cannot say in regard to Mesopotamia that there are primary, direct, strategic British interests involved ... our policy in Mesopotamia is to reduce our commitments and to extract ourselves from our burdens while at the same time honourably discharging our obligations and building up a strong and effective Arab government which will be the friend of Britain.¹

Churchill's argument was partially confirmed by a Memorandum of the War Office, in which it was asserted that:

'5. ... It is not for any military reason that we are there [in Mesopotamia] ...

6. The idea of maintaining troops in Mesopotamia or Persia for the defence of India is radically unsound, and has never been contemplated by [H.M.G.].²

Britain's War Aims

Arguments of this sort must immediately bring into question the motives behind the British occupation of Iraq and the British suppression of the rising. There were a variety of ideas and outlooks existing among the British. Iraq, as far as the British strategic interests were concerned, was not a single and indivisible unit. The south of Iraq (Basrah and its surroundings) was of vital importance to the British. Whereas the northern part of Iraq (Baghdad and Mosul) had no strategic interest for the Empire. Such division of Iraq had been clear in the British mind since 1898.³ The southern half of Iraq 'formed part of the Persian Gulf' sphere of interest 'in which Britain's diplomacy had for two centuries built up a unique position.... trade interests, ocean navigation, a strategic route to India were all involved'.⁴ It was not surprising that Britain regarded 'the concession by any power of a part upon the Persian Gulf to Russia [or Germany]⁵ as international provocation to war'.⁶

1. Parliamentary Debates, H.C. Vol.143, p.276, dated June 14, 1921

2. F.O.371/5232/E.15721. Memo by the S. of S. for War dated 10th December 1920

3. G.P. Gooch and H.W.V. Temperley (eds), op. cit., Vol.1, p.8

4. S.H. Longrigg, Iraq ..., op. cit., p.3

5. Parliamentary Debates, H.L. 5th Series, March 1911, Vol.7, pp.583587-9; H.C., 5th Series, 1911, Vol.21, pp.241-2.

6. G.E. Kirk, op. cit., pp.88-9

In fact it was suggested that the occupation of the southern part of Iraq was planned years before it happened.¹

'Towards the close of September 1914, it became evident' wrote Lloyd George, 'that Turkey was likely to join the enemy powers. This made it at once important to take steps for safeguarding the oil supplies in the Persian Gulf which was owned by the [A.P.O.C.], ... as means of ensuring supplies of oil fuel for the Navy'.² In the early part of 1914, the oil pipeline (in Arabistan) had been doubled and the refineries at Abadan had been greatly increased.³ It was obvious that these refineries could easily be reached by Turkish troops from Basrah. Furthermore the Government of India wanted to prevent eastward penetration by German agents, and to protect the friendly Sheikhs of Kuwait and Mohammarah.⁴

Thus it could be concluded that the original British object was not the occupation of Iraq so much as the guarantee of the British interests in the Gulf and, perhaps, Basrah. This indicates that the basic aim of British strategy could be achieved by a friendly power ruling Iraq which would guarantee the essential interests of the Empire. Such a power need not be provided by direct British rule. But, in 1914, when Wilson made the point, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, there were ambitions for the colonization or annexation of Iraq, and these grew stronger after its occupation became a fact.

Whereas the occupation of Basrah was, evidently an agreed-upon plan, the further advance of British troops north to Baghdad and Mosul was a controversial issue amongst British policy-makers. In fact, Lloyd George considered the pursuit of the campaign as 'a side issue' which was 'to be withdrawn'.⁵ Any accurate reading of the Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918 would not fail to confirm the above conclusion. In November 1914, Cox telegraphed the Viceroy of India suggesting the taking over of Baghdad.⁶ The Viceroy sent Cox's telegram

1. P.W. Ireland, op. cit., p.22; S.H. Longrigg, Iraq..., op. cit., p.77.

2. Lloyd George, War Memories, op. cit., p.803

3. H.A. Foster, The Making of Modern Iraq, (Norman, 1935), p.37

4. E. Monroe, Britain's Moment ..., op. cit., p.25; A. Foster, op. cit., p.38

5. Lloyd George, War Memories, op. cit., p.802.

6. Brig-General F.J. Moberly, History of the Great War Based on Official Documents; The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918, 4 vols. (HMSO 1923-27), Vol.1, p.134, dated 23rd November 1914

to the Secretary of State for India and added that he was of the opinion that the ultimate strategic value of Baghdad was doubtful', 'even success would result in our general strategical position being weakened rather than strengthened'.

In August 1915, Sir John Nixon (who had assumed command of the Mesopotamian Expedition on April 9th) suggested an advance to Baghdad as the best way of counteracting unrest in Persia. In September 1915, Lord Hardinge wrote to Mr. Chamberlain pointing out the great effect in the East which the capture of Baghdad by the British should have.² Nevertheless General Barrow (at the India Office) advocated a policy of caution and prompt orders to General Nixon not to advance.³ On October 4th, Chamberlain wired officially to India 'there is no object in continuing the pursuit...'.⁴ On October 6th, Hardinge wired privately to Chamberlain pointing out the ease with which Baghdad could be occupied, and arguing:

'... from a political point of view, capture of Baghdad would create an immense impression in the Middle East, especially in Persia, Afghanistan and on our frontier and would counteract unfortunate impression created by want of success in Dardanelles. It would isolate German parties in Persia, probably produce pacifying effect in that country and frustrate German plan of raising Afghanistan and the tribes, while impression throughout Arabia would be striking. In India effect would be undoubtedly good'.⁵

Without going into further details,⁶ it was reasons of the above character⁷ which eventually, but not without difficulties,⁸ convinced the higher Authorities to agree to the occupation of Baghdad and beyond. However, the 'persuasive' arguments revealed that the occupation was considered for external reasons rather than intended to protect or establish any direct interest in Iraq proper.

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1. Ibid., pp.135-6, dated 25th November, 1914
 2. Ibid., Vol.II, pp.3-4
 3. Ibid., pp.7-8
 4. Ibid., p.8
 5. Ibid., pp.15-16
 6. Ibid., pp.16-17, 450
 7. General Barrow wrote the appreciation of the campaign against Basrah. Ibid., Vol.I, p.88. However General Barrow himself opposed the occupation of Baghdad.
 8. Ibid., Vol.II, p.28. 'Lord Kitchener did not altogether concur in the telegram sent to Lord Hardinge ... He was not in favour of anything but a raid on Baghdad ...'. In fact W. Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, was opposed even to the occupation of Basrah. Ibid., Vol.I, p.82

Lord Curzon pointed out that:

'When we originally despatched a force to Basrah, we had no intention of holding Mesopotamia permanently. We had been gradually drawn on to Baghdad and ... The Cabinet were anxious to reduce the financial¹ and military commitments² of H.M.G. as far as possible'.³

Nonetheless, when Baghdad was occupied in 1917, a new political reality was created. This was bound to bring to the surface the conflicting views amongst British policy-makers. The first symptom came with Maude's Declaration with its rosy promises of an impending Arab Government.⁴ Once Baghdad was occupied, the British Government had made its position very clear indeed:

'H.M.G. issued instruction that the existing administrative machinery was to be preserved as far as possible, substituting Arab for Turkish spirit and personnel, and that every effort should be made to induce local representative men to come forward and participate in the Civil Administration, British co-operation being limited as far as possible to advisory functions'.⁵

Nevertheless, none of those and further instructions and proclamations were put into actual practice. Sir Arnold Wilson was the British man on the spot and it was made clear (vide previous Chapters) that he carried out the policy which he desired and saw fit. Such a conclusion is not an attempt to victimize Wilson as a scapegoat.⁶ After all, the British Government had allowed a subordinate to implement a policy which ran counter to its wishes. This encourages the notion that without the rising of 1920, the "Wilsonian" line might well have had a chance of enforcing its scheme or a modified version of it.

There is no necessity to elaborate on a subject which touches upon the internal dynamics of the British Policy. But it is interesting to note Lawrence's views on the issue:

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1. The Mesopotamian Campaign cost Britain £200 million. Parliamentary Debates, H.C. Vol.151 (1922), p.1546
 2. British war casualties were 92.501. F.J. Moberly, op. cit., Vol.IV, p.331
 3. F.O.371/5068. Minutes of meeting held at F.O. on April 13th 1920, of Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs.
 4. Supra, p.316
 5. F.J. Moberly, op. cit., Vol.III, p.254
 6. A. Wilson wrote to A. Hirtzel: 'I do not believe that anything I have done, or could have done, would have substantially changed the march of events ... If H.M.G. wish to utilize my services as a scapegoat or Aunt Sally I should not attempt to avoid such a fate ...'. Sir A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52444, Vol.I, draft letter.

'It is the old story of leaving everything to the man on the spot ... It is rare to get an intelligible telegram of instructions from the Government. And today the position is even worse ... The Government cannot do anything and the newspapers cannot do anything ... Until you get the right man there we shall go on fighting advanced opinion everywhere in Mesopotamia'.¹

Lord Curzon left no doubt that Wilson was the supreme Authority in Iraqi affairs. Curzon pointed out that:

'... there had been two schools of thought all the way through, the first of which Colonel Wilson was the most notable exponent, was the school of direct British Administration. The second ... was the National State school'.²

Curzon went on:

'Colonel Wilson, being a man of great energy and power, had, in virtue of his official position, succeeded in bringing his view into force, and /H.M.G./ had been more or less obliged to acquiesce'.³

In late 1919, the Foreign Office sent a despatch to Sir Percy Cox who was in Tehran, the Foreign Office argued that the existing administration 'is rigid, costly, and hampering to development either of civil administration or whatever form of native Government is decided in future'.⁴ The Foreign Office went on to assert that:

'Meanwhile the system of civil administration ... appears neither to fulfil joint declaration of November 1918, nor to satisfy local aspiration, nor to proceed with sufficient rapidity. It is a system of British Government advised by Arabs (and this only to a small extent) rather than of Arab Government advised by British ... Already this system is subjected to severe criticism from many quarters ... Feisal ... His officers ... a number of local leagues and societies are agitating in similar direction. Finally we receive very disquieting reports from some of our own officials⁵ who witness with growing anxiety the existing trend of administration'.⁶

Cox's reply was indicative:

'I agree that existing system of Administration does not fulfil in all respects either letter or spirit of Anglo-French declaration ... I always doubted whether that declaration provided practical basis for Administration of Mesopotamia'.⁷

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1. Daily Herald, 'Ferment for Freedom; Colonel Lawrence on Eastern Problem', dated 9 August 1920.
 2. F.O.371/5068. Minutes of meeting held at F.O. of the I.D.C.M.E.A. dated 13 April 1920.
 3. Ibid.
 4. F.O.371/4185/152286. From F.O. to Sir Percy Cox, dated 14th November 1919.
 5. This might be a reference to the 'private' letters of Gertrude Bell. J. Marlowe, op. cit., pp.202-7
 6. F.O. 371/4185/152286, From C.O. to Cox, dated 14th November 1919
 7. Ibid., 157324. From Percy Cox to F.O. dated November 23rd 1919

Thus Wilson went on to carry out his own policies in Iraq, but he was unable to silence the 'rising tide of criticism' represented by the British Press and echoed in Parliament.

The Attitude of British 'Public Opinion'

Such a tide of disapproval with the Mesopotamian policy was the product of the post-War conditions which nourished the emergence of two trends; the 'economists' who demanded an urgent and drastic reduction of the Empire's expenses; and the 'liberals' who advocated a policy of self determination to be granted to the subordinated nations. Both trends were highly critical of the policy carried out in Iraq and voiced their protests against it.

The news of the rising was to make the beginning of a wide campaign in the British Press. Lawrence claimed that 'Practically the whole of the responsible opinion in England is against our present policy in Mesopotamia. Lloyd George and other Ministers are against it. Almost all the newspapers are against it'.¹ In August 1920 The Times demanded 'first, a statement upon the present position of the rising in Mesopotamia; secondly, an explanation of the causes of the rising; and thirdly, a clear and frank declaration of future policy in Mesopotamia ...'.² It went on to argue that:

'Mesopotamia will not "pay" in a thousand years. Mr. Buckley, of the Egyptian Irrigation Department, has shown that if £31,000,000 are spent on irrigation, and three million acres are brought under cultivation, the gross revenue of Mesopotamia (excluding the oil) may reach £10,000,000 - in "fifty years time". To achieve this object the almost unsurpassable labour difficulties must first be overcome ... Our object should be to get away our troops as soon as we can ...'.³

The 'economist' article of The Times was an attempt to show the futility of Iraq as a profitable acquisition.⁴ Three days later The Times assumed a liberal stance and argued:

1. The Daily Herald, dated 9 August 1920

2. The Times, dated 16 August 1920

3. Ibid.

4. A.B. Buckley, Mesopotamia as a Country for Future Development, (Cairo, 1919). This book cast away some of the 'optimistic' prospects concerning Mesopotamia which was encouraged by Sir W. Willcocks's, Irrigation of Mesopotamia

'By no straining of words can the participants in the rising be called rebels ... That they should take such a course is not very surprising. The civil authorities in Mesopotamia ... have sought to set up an elaborate administration such as the country will not require for the next fifty years. They have inflicted upon these backward lands hundreds of excessively-paid officials ... They have imposed taxation enormously in excess of the average incidence of taxation in India, although Mesopotamia ... is notoriously impoverished ... They are endeavouring to back up their policy by maintaining in Mesopotamia troops now equal in numbers to nearly half the strength of the standing Army of India, British and Indian troops combined, in the years preceding the Great War ... Need we look farther for the origins of the revolt?'.¹

The Times went on to show the alarming consequences of the Mesopotamian policy on Britain itself:

'We are approaching critical times in our own land. /a great increase of unemployment, and a further rise of prices/ due in part to the huge and wasteful squandering by the Government in distant lands ... With such a prospect ahead, the determination of the Cabinet to incur a vast outlay in fighting Arabs who reject us and our Organic Laws seems to us almost insane'.²

Such a notion was confirmed by Sir Stanley Reed (Editor of The Times of India); he wrote to Wilson 'there is only one thing to be done, to get out of every inch of territory, save the Basrah Vilayet, as soon as it can be done'.³ Reed went to the extent of suggesting that 'To hold the country by force of Arms is merely to precipitate a Soviet Government in the United Kingdom and a swaraj administration in India'.⁴

The most open and notable exponent of an Arab Administration in Iraq was Lawrence who proposed the significant notion that the 'tribal disorder' was an organic part of the nationalist movement:

'A few weeks ago the chief of our administration in Baghdad asked to receive some Arab notables who wanted to urge their case for partial autonomy /the Mandubān/. He packed the delegation with some nominees of his own, and in replying, told them that it would be long before they were fit for responsibility. Brave words - but the burden of them has been heavy on the Manchesterners this week at Hillah'.⁵

1. The Times, dated 19 August 1920

2. Ibid.

3. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52457, Vol.3, dated Bombay, September 16th 1920

4. Ibid.

5. The Observer, dated 8 August 1920

In a detailed interview, Lawrence elaborated his views at length. In the first place he asserted the importance of Nationalism: 'Muhammadans and Copts are working side by side for nationalism ... the old quarrels between Sunni and Shiah are being forgotten'.¹ Lawrence summed up his solution to the problem:

'Clear them out /British Officials/ and fill their places with educated Arabs - of whom there is no lack - and the problem will solve itself. It is our avowed policy to set up an Arab Government in Mesopotamia, and it is only reasonable that Arabs should do the work ...'.²

On July 12th, the Daily Mail published a long article in which the writer (Lovat Fraser) argued that 'There is nothing in all our history to compare with our folly in Mesopotamia'.³

The dominating trend in the British Press leaves no doubt as to the direction of the British 'public opinion' towards the Iraqi question. The strength of such a trend lay in its representation of the fact that Britain's strategic interests in Iraq did not necessitate its direct presence. Furthermore, such a trend was consistently echoed in Parliament,⁴ and in fact it reflected ideas and views which were official:

'Wickham Steed of The Times is attacking me personally partly violently. I wonder who is putting him up to it. The /F.O./ I presume. Not that I care in the least, but the virulence of their attack upon a permanent official is somewhat unusual'.⁵

We are already aware of Lord Curzon's attitude; it is interesting to find that Mr. Montagu was no less eager to settle the Iraqi problem on the lines of an Arab Government even without a Mandate. On April 13th 1920, and in an Inter-Departmental Conference, Montagu said that Wilson recommended that the people should not be consulted. 'He /Montagu/ did not agree with this himself. What he wished us to say was that our intention was to set up a national Government in an Arab State, thus silencing the suspicious'. Montagu went on to point out

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1. The Daily Herald, dated 9 August 1920. *Appendix VII.*
 2. Ibid.
 3. The Daily Mail, dated 12 July 1920. See Appendix V.
 4. The Parliamentary Debates, H.C., 5th Series (HMSO 1920), Vol.127, pp.644-5, 662, 712, Vol.130, pp.1468, 1991, Vol.132, pp.959-60, Vol.133, pp.1091-2, 1528.
 5. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52455, Vol.1, letter to A. Hirtzel, 26 July 1920

'he would welcome anything which would cancel the idea of a mandate, which was already regarded as an indignity. He would much prefer to see an independent State set up in Mesopotamia with which H.M.G. could enter into treaty relations on the lines of the Anglo Persian Agreement. Lord Curzon said that 'He was himself anxious to get rid of mandates altogether'.¹

Moreover, the impact of the British Press and Parliamentary debates was strongly felt in Iraq itself. They had fed the nationalists' drive against the local Administration in the most effective way. 'Articles in the English papers were greeted by the extremists as evidence that the mandate was as unacceptable in London as in Baghdad'.² Furthermore, Wilson pointed out that certain people³ 'make it their business to convey to extremists in detail all references in the English Press unfavourable to Local and Imperial policy of [H.M.G.], notably articles from The Times [and the debates in H.C.] which are freely referred to by extremists in their public speeches and conversations'.⁴

The Three Alternatives

This brings into question the real or essential aims of 'Britain' in Iraq; in other words, what did the British policy want to establish in Iraq? In early 1918, Hirtzel argued that 'Annexation (of Basrah) is presumably now out of the question, or even the veiled annexation contemplated in the [Sykes-Picot] agreement. The Arab facade of which the Committee⁵ talked must be something more than a facade ...'.⁶ At the same time Hirtzel asserted that 'It is clear that somehow or other we must retain predominating influence in Mesopotamia ...'.⁷

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1. F.O.371/5068, Minutes of meeting of I.D.C.M.E.A. dated 13 April 1920.
 2. A.T. Wilson, Clash ..., op. cit., p.255
 3. Wilson was referring to the 'United States Consul and /the Standard Oil Company's representative in Baghdad'.
C.C. telegrams No.7321 dated 17th June 1920; no.7779, dated 26th June 1920 included an intercepted letter from W.H. Gallaher (representative of S.O.C.);
A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52458, Vol.4.No.9339. 3.9.20
These accusations were, independently, confirmed by the W.O. memo No.121/3/1576 (M.I.2), 25th January 1920 .F.O. 371/6360/2276.
 4. F.O. 371/5228/E.9849. From C.C. Baghdad, dated 15 August 1920
 5. On March 19th 1917, the Cabinet formed 'The Mesopotamian Administrative Committee' to discuss the political future of Iraq. F.O.371/3051/68626
 6. Cab./27/23. A memo, by Sir A. Hirtzel 'Future of Mesopotamia' dated January 11th 1918
 7. Ibid.

Two years later in February 1920 Hirtzel wrote privately to Wilson:

'Have you ever considered the possibility of having to clear out? It is a possibility which is slowly becoming a probability. ... What we want is some modicum of Arab institutions which we can safely leave while pulling the strings ourselves, something which won't cost very much, something that Labour can swallow consistently with their principles, but in which our influence and political and economic interests will be secure. ... It is time for cutting down all ambitions, for reducing all responsibilities to the narrowest limits. We shall come to grief if we try anything else'.¹

To Wilson's frame of reference there were only two alternatives: the British 'must either govern or go'.² On June 9th 1920 Wilson was aware that 'a centre party does not at present exist, with the result that extremists have the stage to themselves'. He urged his Government to allow him to declare his constitutional reforms and agree to send a deputation to London. This was supposed to enable him to feel 'strong enough to take drastic action against the small gang of leading irreconcilables, whose increasing influence constitutes a public danger'.³

On the same day he sent another telegram in which he made his position very clear. Wilson argued:

'... Last February I warned Government that we must hold what we then had with the troops then in the country, or clear out, and that there was no middle course ... We cannot give effect to mandate without risk of disaster, unless we are prepared to maintain for the next two years at least as many troops in the country as we may have, and in a state considerably more efficient than they are now ... [We must] regain possession of Dair-az-Zor up to Rakka inclusive ... we cannot maintain our position as mandatory by a policy of conciliation of extremists ... We must be prepared, regardless of League of Nations, to go very slowly with constitutional or democratic institutions ... If [H.M.G.] regard such a policy as impracticable or beyond our strength (as well they may), I submit they would better to face the alternative ... and evacuate Mesopotamia ... it is my conviction that half measures will end in disasters ...'.⁴

Young minuted that Wilson was stating that 'there are only two alternatives before us; either to hold Mesopotamia by force; or to withdraw altogether'. He went on to point out that:

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1. Cited by J. Marlowe, op. cit., pp.182-3. Italics mine.
 2. A.T. Wilson, Private Papers, B.M. No.52455, Vol.1, telegram dated 29 July 1920, No.9180
 3. F.O.371/5227/E.6509. From C.C. Baghdad, dated 9 June 1920, No.6976.
 4. Ibid., From C.C. Baghdad, dated 9 June 1920, No.6948

'Wilson' makes no mention whatever of the third alternative which has always been the policy of H.M.G. namely to remain in Mesopotamia with the goodwill of the people. The reason for this is not far to seek. It is because he knows that we cannot obtain the goodwill of the people without instituting a predominantly Arab Government, and this I am perfectly certain Colonel Wilson will use every effort to prevent'.¹

In an Inter-Departmental meeting, which was held with the first news of the rising emanating from Baghdad, it was clearly revealed the considerable weakness of Wilson's views among British policy makers. Curzon argued that 'It was a great pity that Colonel Wilson had been left so long in Mesopotamia'. The meeting was convinced that the removal of Wilson was a necessity. The obvious alternative was Percy Cox because as Montagu put it 'All Wilson's officers were as Wilsonian as he was'.² However, Curzon went to the extent of arguing:

'We are not quite sure that Cox knew what our policy was to be. It appeared ... that Cox was rather more Wilsonian in his outlook than we were ... There was a fear that Sir Percy Cox .. might adopt a more Wilsonian attitude than we wished him to'.

Curzon outlined the opinion of 'which we felt sure that the Conference concurred', to be 'that we should continue the middle course of retaining our position in the country with the good will of the people'.³

Marlowe gave the following reasons for the resentment caused by Wilson's line to the higher Authorities:

'Wilson was continually confronting them either with a demand for a clear-cut decision or with a fait accompli, or with a demand for a choice between two over-simplified alternatives'.⁴

I would like to add that Wilson's alternatives were resented basically because they were in violation of the line desired by 'Whitehall'.

The Impact of the Uprising

The original limitations of the rising coupled with its military defeat were

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1. Ibid., dated 16 June 1920, Italics mine.
 2. Corbett and Hirtzel pointed out that Sir Edgar Bonham Carter 'was a literal-minded man'.
 3. F.O.371/5226/4811. Minutes of I.D.C.E., 27 June 1920.
 4. J. Marlowe, op. cit., pp.256-7

factors in reducing its impact to a mere influence on the British policy.. In this respect the rising could be credited with bringing the whole Iraqi question into focus and eliminated the possibility of further delay. The rising precipitated the advent of a new policy. Such a policy was bound to be largely influenced by the interpretation (whether accurate or imaginary) given by the policy makers for the causes of, and forces behind, the rising. Furthermore, the rising damaged beyond repair the possibility of 'govern by force' and left only two alternatives; evacuation or predominant British influence with the consent of the Iraqis.

Once the issue of evacuation was put on the agenda, the British firms and financial interests were to exercise a counter pressure. On July 28th 1920 the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce sent a message to the Civil Commissioner expressing 'satisfaction at decision of H.M.G. to accept mandate', urging that 'British forces be retained' and deprecating attaching 'too much importance to present troubles with tribes' and that 'tribal risings will cease when Arabs realise that firm and settled government will secure them'.¹ On July 30th 1920, a British Company asked 'for assurance that it is not the intention of H.M.G. to withdraw from Mesopotamia'.² Next day another Company sought a similar assurance.³ On December 29th 1920, the India Office received a protest from Baghdad Chamber of Commerce 'against evacuation of Mesopotamia'.⁴ The impact of such a pressure was clearly shown in Cox's telegram in which he suggested that 'leading Commercial and Financial houses interested in Mesopotamia should be consulted as to the direction and extent to which their cooperation in future administration of Mesopotamia may be expected'.⁵

Wilson pointed out that British capital 'sunk' in Iraq at the end of 1919 was estimated to be £16 million. In addition to the 'capitalized value of the oil fields may be taken as £50,000,000 at a low valuation. Other minerals ...

1. F.O.371/5228/E.9413. Baghdad telegram transmitting message from Baghdad Chamber of Commerce.

2. Ibid., E.10061

3. Ibid., E.10062

4. F.O.371/6349/218. From Sir Percy Cox to I.O.

5. Ibid. 162/2451. From H.C. Baghdad, dated 16th February 1921

are known to exist in Kurdistan'. Wilson went on to assert that imports have trebled since 1913 and 'now stand at £16,000,000' of which £10 million is from Britain. Wilson concluded that 'Any diminution in the authority of Government ... would involve widespread disaster to British and local trade interests'.¹

In March 1920 the Prime Minister replied to Mr. Asquith that 'Mosul ... has rich oil deposits. Iraq should be dealt with as one unit'.²

These arguments were counter-balanced by the large Mesopotamian expenditure which was a heavy burden on the British Treasury. Furthermore, the question of evacuation was of a wider dimension. It was hardly practical and formed a threat to the more serious aspects of the British imperial strategy in the area. On April 10th 1920, Miss Bell predicted that 'we're on the edge of a pretty considerable Arab nationalist demonstration' and asserted 'with which I'm a good deal in sympathy'. Nevertheless she argued that 'If Mesopotamia goes Persia goes inevitably and then India'.³

On December 10th 1920, the Secretary of State for War argued in a memorandum:

'From the strategical point of view the only justification for the maintenance of military forces in Mesopotamia is ... to keep control of the Persian Gulf and to protect the Anglo-Persian Oilfields, which were, and are vital to the navy'.⁴

Thus it was requested to withdraw British troops to Basrah 'as soon as possible'.⁵

General Haldane informed the High Commissioner that:

'The Army Council have intimated that by the 31st March 1921, they expect that the whole of the reinforcement amounting to 20 battalions ... which at my request were sent ... at the time of the outbreak ... will be re-embarked for India or elsewhere'.⁶

This suggests that the War Office was not totally aware of the political implications and consequences of its views or demands. The Secretary of State for India circulated a note to the Cabinet pointing out that withdrawal to Basrah

1. F.O.882/24. From C.C. Baghdad to I.O. 15th November 1919. Appendix XI.

2. The Parliamentary Debates, H.C. op. cit., Vol.127, p.662 Italics mine.

3. Lady Bell, (ed.), op. cit., p.486

4. F.O.371/5232/E.15721, Italics mine.

5. F.O.371/6348/244. From W.O. to I.O. No.87318, 23rd December 1920

6. F.O.371/6349/227. From Gen. Haldane to H.C. No. O/2088/50, 6th November 1920

would mean abandoning Mandate and urging consideration of the matter in this light. Furthermore, he pointed out that in case of evacuation, then Basrah would need at least a British division for protection. However there was no guarantee against a Turkish or Bolshevik advance in the rest of Iraq. In such a case one British division would not be sufficient for the defence of Basrah.¹

On November 6th 1920, General Haldane made it amply clear that 'The question of the reduction of the garrison ... is not only closely bound up with that of disarmament, but with the creation of an Arab Army'.² This confirms the opinion that the British evacuation of Iraq was closely bound up with the creation of an Arab Administration and Army to fill the vacuum and prevent the occupation of Iraq by 'seven devils'. Such a notion was confirmed by Cox's telegram of November, 12th in which he referred to the question of the mandate and its responsibilities, the importance of locally recruited force and concluded that evacuation for the time being was impracticable.³ On November 15th 1920, Haldane telegraphed the War Office stating that he cannot recommend reduction in regular garrison pending 'replacement by local troops. Do not propose to take any action pending decision as to future policy in Iraq'.⁴

Long after the events, Sir Percy Cox summarised the situation in the following words:

'... it was clear that the rising must be suppressed before any other course of action was possible and the question at issue was whether after the restoration of law and order, we should cut our losses, abandon the Mandate and evacuate the country, or immediately set up a national Government ... to my mind evacuation was unthinkable; it would mean the abandonment of the Mandate and of the seven or eight millions worth of capital assets which we had in the country; the complete violation of all the promises we had made to the Arabs ... As to whether the alternative policy of establishing forthwith a national Government had a reasonable chance of success, I replied that without being too confident, I thought it had, and that the risk at any rate worth taking if regarded the only alternative to evacuation'.⁵

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1. F.O.371/6348/244. Note circulated to Cabinet by S. of S. for India, dated 24th December 1920.
 2. F.O.371/6349/227. From Haldane to H.C. No. 0/2088/50. Italics mine.
 3. Ibid. From H.C. Baghdad No S.D.89, to G.O.C. in C.M.E.F., dated 12th November 1920
 4. Ibid., From G. Headquarters, M.E.F. Baghdad to S.W.O. 15th November 1920
 5. Percy Cox, 'Tribute to Gertrude Bell', in Lady Bell (ed), Letters ..., op: cit., pp.526-7. Italics mine.

In fact when Cox became aware of the demand to withdraw troops to Basrah¹ he forwarded his opinion which was 'if we cannot hold Baghdad and Mosul Wilayets, we must refuse mandate altogether; and ... hold only ... Basrah under full British administration'.² Cox was not, however, really convinced of the latter part of his argument. He believed in (indeed strived for) the indivisibility of Iraq. 'There is, remember, no defensible frontier between Mosul and Baghdad, and if the Turks take Baghdad will they not aim at taking Basra too?',³ thus Cox argued his case to the British Government. On the wider issue of evacuation, Cox pointed to the problems involved: '... The Persian oilfields will again be threatened; those of Iraq, of which there is a good evidence, will be in hostile hands; our promising trade with Iraq will suffer ...'.⁴

If the policy of 'govern by force' meant intolerable expenses, defiance of British and Iraqi public opinion, then the alternative of 'evacuation' involved the unjustifiable sacrifice of British interests and prestige. Thus a middle course which could guarantee the interests, and at the same time cut the expenditure was envisaged as the best solution. To choose Churchill's words, 'Faisal offers hope of best and cheapest solution',⁵ and indeed it was.⁶ This view of the preservation of British interests coupled with reduction in expenditure, and the coronation of Faisal was also supported by Cox.⁷ But why should Faisal represent such a 'fortune'? This was linked to the way that British policy makers had interpreted the causes of, and forces behind the discontent of the Iraqis.

On August 5th Wilson sent a long telegram in which he attributed the movement to 'steady inflow of propaganda from Syria and ... Turkey supported by ample funds'.⁸ He went on to emphasise the importance of external factors coupled

1. F.O.371/6349/222. W.O. to Haldane, No.87319, 3rd December 1920.

2. Ibid. H.C., no.148S, 2nd January 1920

3. P. Graves, The Life of Sir Percy Cox, op. cit., p.324

4. Ibid.

5. F.O.371/6350. Churchill to P.M., Cairo, 21st March 1921.

6. British expenditure in Iraq was reduced to less than £8 million in 1922-1923 and to less than £6 million in 1923-1924. It was £32 million in 1920-1921.

7. F.O.371/6349/222. H.C. 2nd January 1921, No.148S

8. F.O.371/5228/E.9849. C.C. Baghdad, 5th August 1920, No.9450.

with British military weakness as the most essential elements behind the outbreak of violence. In a second telegram he admitted certain internal factors related to his Administration. But he continued to hold the belief that external agitation was mainly responsible for the occurrence of the events.¹

On August 26th, Montagu circulated a secret 'Note'. He pointed out that as a result of Lawrence's letters to The Times, 'general opinion' was left with the impression that the British 'are fighting against Nationalists who are demanding only a form of Government that shall be reasonably independent and British-advised'. Montagu flatly stated that the object of his 'Memorandum /is/ to suggest that the cause of the outbreak is to be sought outside Mesopotamia'. He went on to suggest that:

'We have therefore to recognise that we are fighting against unknown enemy ... (a) It has long been recognised that the Arab party can be roughly divided into two sections: (1) the sane extremists who desire independence under British control; and (2) the ultra-extremists, who desire to see the abolition of European control ... (b) These ultra-extremists command the sympathy of ... the Bolsheviks, the Indian anarchists, and the Kemalists. Mustapha Kemal is now openly Bolshevik ... the representatives of the Standard Oil in Baghdad ... Whether independent movements or separate manifestations of a single conspiracy, they are at least allied'.²

In spite of this 'ultra-conspiratorial' analysis, Montagu was to reach a 'sane' conclusion. 'The only means whereby we can combat the ultra-extremists' he argued, 'is by securing the support of the pro-British nationalists'. Thus he suggested that 'all energies should be directed on ... preparing a nationalist party which will ... be ready to assume the government, under British advice'.³

On September 14th, Major N.N.E. Bray (Special Intelligence Officer attached to the Political Department of the India Office) submitted his 'very secret' 'Mesopotamia. Preliminary Report on Causes of Unrest'. He commenced his report by arguing:

'It is to the educated classes ... that we look for political trouble or peace ... Among them for years has grown up an Arab Nationalist spirit ... Independence is with them something very real ... this party having legitimate aims for which many of them had sacrificed a good deal, were as a political party capable of producing a serious pan-Arab agitation and so causing considerable unrest'.⁴

1. F.O.371/5229/E.10109. From C.C. Baghdad, 12th August, 1920, No.9700.

2. F.O.371/5229/E.10440. 'Note on the Causes of the Outbreak in Mesopotamia'.

3. Ibid.

4. F.O.371/5230/E.12339

Nevertheless, Major Bray was inclined to see the Iraqi unrest as part of a universal conspiracy 'organized through various societies, and directed by outside influence through the medium of Berlin and Moscow ... The situation is further complicated with Italian, French and Bolshevist intrigues'.¹

In October 1920, the General Staff of the War Office submitted its report 'Cause of the Outbreak in Mesopotamia' in which it argued that the Iraqi rising was but part of 'the malign influence of Moscow'.²

Such opinions were bound to be challenged by other Officials. Clayton wrote 'In my opinion external influences and subversive propaganda seldom incite orientals (especially the peasantry) to extreme action on an extended scale, unless the ground is prepared by the existence of grievances'. Clayton suggested a 'nationalist party to take over the government subject to British advice and control'.³

On July 15th, Major Young expressed the opinion that Nuri and Ja'far were 'almost our last hope'.⁴ Three days later, he wrote a memorandum in which he suggested, amongst other things, the removal of Wilson, the despatch of Nuri and Ja'far to Iraq and the proclamation that Britain would approve any ruler chosen by a legislative assembly.⁵ Furthermore, Major Young was to dispute Major Bray's analysis. He attributed the unrest of Iraqi 'Nationalists who were discontented with our administration; who had lost all hope of gaining the independence ... and who influenced the ignorant tribesmen by appealing to sentiments which we did not and shall not ever share with them'.⁶ Young concluded that:

'If, as Major Bray argues, ... our mistakes have only been contributory, the prospect is not a hopeful one for the future: and ... we should clear out of Mesopotamia altogether. If, on the other hand ... it is our own mistakes which really caused the trouble ... we have only to correct our mistakes ...'.⁷

1. Ibid.

2. W.O.33/969

3. F.O.371/5229/E.10440, dated 26th August 1920

4. F.O.371/5036

5. F.O.371/5228, dated 18th July 1920

6. F.O.371/5230/E.12339, Major Young minute dated 12th October 1920

7. Ibid

Another challenge to Bray's assumptions came from Cornwallis (then Director of the Arab Bureau). Cornwallis did not altogether dismiss the Iraqi nationalists' external connections, but was of the opinion that a change of British policy towards the establishment of an Arab independence would bring an end to such alarming connections. Cornwallis was convinced that 'the Arabs know perfectly well that they must obtain help from outside and at heart they would prefer to obtain it from us than from the Turks or Germans or Bolsheviks'.¹

However, Major Bray persisted in his argument and submitted a second report with more elaboration on the 'universal conspiracy' to undermine British influence. Bray suggested some counter-measures to foil this plot. Of high significance, he argued:

'As regard Mesopotamia itself the vital point is to separate Pan-Arab from the Turkish Nationalist elements. As a direct means of doing this it would be well worth considering the practicability of ... /this/ through the medium of the El 'Ahd Society which is in heart anti-Turk.'²

Cornwallis commented that:

'The Pan-Arab party in Mesopotamia is ... sincere and ardent in its desire for independence ... The majority of this party favour development under British control, they have been persuaded that the independence they hoped for was being denied them. If we can enlighten them as to our honesty of purpose there would appear to be good grounds for hoping we might detach them from the Nationalist-Bolshevik control'.³

Major Young in a strongly-worded comment wrote:

'... I believe that peace cannot be permanently restored unless this society /al 'Ahd/ is on our side but would point out that the society, which I believe is the moving power of the patriotic movement in Mesopotamia, is fighting for an ideal and that until this ideal is satisfied to an extent which will content its moderate members, there is not possibility of enlisting its wholehearted support.

A nation which, according to a recent report from Baghdad, has suffered at least 8,000 casualties in a few months and is still unsubdued, is not going to be convinced of our honesty of purpose by words'.⁴

1. Ibid., K. Cornwallis minute dated 10th October 1920

2. F.O.371/5231/E.12966. Report No.11, 'On Causes of Unrest in Mesopotamia' by Major N.N. Bray, Special Intelligence Officer Attached to P. Dept., I.O.

3. Ibid. Minute dated 22nd October 1920

4. Ibid.

Faisal as an Alternative

In 1921, Philby told Faisal that his chances of being king of Iraq were extremely slender if he was to base his campaign on the fact that he was the accepted nominee of the British Government. Philby advised Faisal to seek the support of the people as the champion of their complete independence.¹ Such an argument reveals an idealist vision which did not grasp the realities of the Iraqi situation nor the motives and ends of the British policy. Had Faisal been the candidate of 'absolute independence',² the British would never have allowed him the Iraqi throne. Had he been a mere British puppet, as it is often implied, he would also have had no chance of gaining the throne. Faisal's policy which promised the safeguarding of a predominant British influence and the establishment of an Arab administration was the only accepted and possible formula at that period.

What the British really wanted was the establishment of a new order which could retain two purposes: a predominant British influence, and yet a drastic reduction in their Mesopotamian expenditure. The second aim of this difficult equation implied the necessity of satisfying the bulk of the population and the nationalist element in particular. The arguments of Lawrence, Bell and Young have convinced the Authorities that the rising was a nationalist model:

'It was this /nationalist/ propaganda which was the sole and only cause of the stirring up of revolt here. For the primary movers were actuated by the pure spirit of nationalism. It is true they had to add to it pan-Islamism before they could stir the mass, true again that the tribes would not have come out but for the hope of loot, and the prospect of paying no taxes; none of these passions and prejudices would have been mobilized if the Nationalists had not called them to arms.'³

According to an understanding of this character, the satisfaction of the Iraqi nationalist was deemed a necessity. Thus, Faisal who combined the roles of a British ally and an arab nationalist could be considered as the perfect solution.

In August 1920, the British Government, in its instructions to the newly

1. E. Monroe, Philby ..., op.cit., p.110

2. Al Khālīṣī issued a Fetwa bearing a similar tendency. Al 'Irāq, 16th July 1921. 68 Maḡbaṭa out of 157 of Baghdad elected Faisal on the condition of 'absolute independence'. F.O.371/6352. Intelligence Report No.19, 15th August, 1921.

3. G. Bell, Private Letters and Papers, (Newcastle), 30th January 1920. *Appendix VIII.*

appointed High Commissioner (Sir Percy Cox), raised the idea of Faisal becoming Amir of Iraq. However, such a possibility was clearly conditioned by:

- '(i) a spontaneous demand for Faisal is forthcoming from a sufficiently represented body of public opinion ...
- (ii) Sherif Faisal is prepared in principle to accept Great Britain as Mandatory Power'.¹

The second condition implied the formation of an Arab Government with 'British assistance being rendered in each case by a Secretary who will be an employee of the Arab Government'. Important reservations were put concerning Defence, Foreign Affairs and Finance.² Faisal was acquainted with the conditions and he promised to do all he could 'to make his part of the plan work'.³

It was in July 1920 that Wilson suggested the possibility of offering Faisal the Amirate of Iraq. Wilson argued 'no local candidate will be successful in obtaining sufficient local support'. Moreover, Wilson asserted that Faisal 'can scarcely fail to realise that foreign assistance is vital to the continued existence of an Arab State'.⁴ A fortnight later, Wilson informed the India Office that a Sharifian Amir enjoyed the support of Muntafiq notables and 'Leaders' of Baghdad, Najaf and Karbalā'.⁵

In early July 1920, Haldane informed the War Office of the 'seriousness' of the situation and requested more troops.⁶ Hardinge did not consider that as a 'suitable remedy'. Instead he suggested that 'a clearer indication of our own intentions' and the prompt despatch to Baghdad of Cornwallis. Ja'far and Nuri might allay the spreading unrest.⁷ Young was of a similar opinion. He pointed out the futility of a military solution and added to Hardinge's proposals 'to get into touch with the intriguers from Syria' and to declare

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1. F.O.371/5229/5140. Appointment of Sir P. Cox as H.C.: Instructions of H.M.G. dated 28th August 1920, I.O.
 2. Ibid.
 3. F.O.371/6350/E.4509. Allenby to Curzon, No.240, Cairo 15th April 1921
 4. F.O.141/444/12215. C.C. Baghdad to S.S. of India, No.9249, dated 31st July 1920
 5. Ibid., No.9752, 13th August 1920
 6. F.O.371/5227/E.8071. From G.O.C. Mesopotamia to W.O. Nos.X9349 and X9359, dated 7th July 1920
 7. Ibid., From Hardinge to Curzon, No.39, dated 10th July 1920

the British willingness to accept any Arab ruler chosen by the Legislative Assembly'.¹ Other British Officials were of a different view:

'... the only course open to us is to fight it out. Any large political concessions, such as the installation of an Arab Amir, before order is restored ... would be looked upon ... as an admission of defeat. The Extremists would regard it as a triumph ... and the Moderates would see in it a failure on our part'.²

It was logical that Tilley and Hardinge would not approve such a notion.³

However, Curzon accepted it but only partially. He informed the Prime Minister that Churchill and himself 'have no doubt about necessity' of sending more troops 'but whole question must be faced immediately'.⁴ Thus this suggestive telegram had considered the military suppression of the rising as a step which should be followed by a political and durable solution.

In July 1920, Cox wrote to Churchill that British Government could not consent to an indefinite continuation of the present arrangement which 'involves too great a burden'. He dismissed the idea of a republic, a Turkish prince, or the separation of Basrah. Cox suggested the nomination of Faisal. After stressing the importance of the Anglo-Hashimite cooperation, which Faisal believed in, Cox argued that:

'From reports that have been received from Mesopotamia during past year, both at time of recent rising and since, it appears that this is solution desired by a preponderant body of opinion in Iraq'.⁵

Later in the year, Cox re-emphasised his view and asked his Government to give a 'lead' to the Iraqis. He affirmed that 'a great majority are in favour of ... a Sherif'.⁶

In early 1921, the evacuation of Mosul and Baghdad was still being demanded by the War Office.⁷ Cox expressed the opinion that a large reduction in forces

1. F.O.371/5228/E.8483. British Policy in Mesopotamia, Major Young, pp.1, 13

2. F.O.371/5229/E.10458. Minute by C.M. Patrick, dated 23rd August 1920

3. Ibid.

4. F.O.371/5227/E.8474. F.O. to P.M. No.64, 15th July 1920

5. F.O.371/6351/6831. No.171, dated 9th July 1920

6. F.O.371/6349/215. H.C. to S.C. for C. No.123S, 26th December 1920

7. F.O.371/6349/222. W.O. to H.C. No.87319, 30th December 1920

was possible 'subsequent to election or establishment of Faisal ... as ruler'.¹ The Government was keen that such a step should be in response to a forthcoming demand from Iraqi public opinion. Such an attitude was imperative so as not to provoke France or other candidates, and to comply with the League of Nations. However, Cox warned his Government that hiding 'our own wishes' might well result in a victory to the 'extremists' and it might end with 'a vote for No Mandate'. Thus Cox suggested that acceptance of the 'mandate should be published at once, and Faisal ... should send telegram to Nuri, Ja'far, Tālib and al Naqīb² declaring his nomination.²

Another development made the nomination of Faisal all the more urgent. The Turkish candidate to the Iraqi throne³ was, to the displeasure of the British,⁴ gaining more ground. This was related to the delay of Faisal's coronation. Some tribal Sheikhs were of the opinion that they would desert the Turks if there was to be a real Arab Government and if Faisal was coming. 'Otherwise they would stick to Turks in case British should deceive them'.⁵ A tendency towards a Turkish prince was taking place mainly among ex-Turkish officers and officials⁶ who did not join the Hijaz movement.⁷ However, it was appealing to the Sunni community who were afraid of being swamped by the Shi'ah.⁸ 'The Sharif is known to take a very liberal view on the Shiah question ... it is for this reason that one of his sons is their Shi'ah chosen candidate'.⁹ The pro-Turkish party decided also to support 'Abd al Raḥman al Naqīb.¹⁰ The

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1. Ibid., From H.C. Mesopotamia, 2nd January 1920, No.1485
 2. Ibid.
 3. C.O.370/13/8843. 'Note on Mesopotamia: Question of a Turkish Ruler', 15th February 1921, by P. Dept. I.O. The Candidate was Burhan al Din.
 4. Cox 'regarded the proposal as dangerous'. F.O.371/6349/13. From H.C., 13th February 1921, No.363S
 5. F.O.371/6351/6560. Cox to Churchill, 1st June 1921, No.152
 6. F.O.371/6350/116. Mesop. Intelligence, No.6, 31st January 1921
 7. F.O.371/6349. Mesop. Intelligence, No.1, 15th November 1920
 8. Lady Bell, (ed), op. cit., Vol.2, p.585, 22nd January 1921.
 9. F.O.371/6350/116. Mesopotamia Intelligence Report, No.6, 31st January 1921
 10. F.O.371/6351/6185. Intelligence Report No.10-11, 4th April 1921

latter in his fear of the nationalists, Faisal and a Shi'i takeover, was making public his Ottomanist tendencies.¹ Ruṣāfi, who represented the nationalists with pro-Ottoman inclinations, was brought from Jerusalem² and launched an anti-Faisal campaign.³

The British Authorities were getting nervous about such a development. Cox warned Churchill⁴ and Bell wrote 'If we hesitate the tide of public opinion may turn overwhelmingly to the Turks'.⁵ Curzon wrote:

'... It is necessary therefore to begin as soon as possible to work for Arab independence of a kind which will lead to division between Turks and Arabs and unity between Arabs and British'.⁶

This kind of independence was also desired by the nationalists of the 1920 rising. Suwaīdi, Ṣadr, Yāsiri, Bāzirkān, abu Ṭabīkh, Mukuṭer and abu Timman had all joined Faisal. The pro-Hashimite movement inside Iraq was well organized and effective.⁷

The Cairo Conference was held in March 1921. The 'principal question to be considered was the necessity of a large reduction in military expenditure'.⁸ Such an aim was, according to the conference, organically linked to the coronation of Faisal. Churchill had 'no doubt' that 'Faisal offers far away best chance of saving our money'.⁹ To cut the 'incredible waste now proceeding in Mesopotamia',¹⁰ Churchill suggested a plan which in its final stage will result in the drastic cut of the British garrison in Iraq. He went

1. M.Ṣ. al Daftari Papers.

2. K. al Jādirji Papers.

3. Al 'Irāq, 5th May 1921; Al Sharq, 7th October 1920

4. F.O.371/6349/13, dated 13th February 1921, No.3635

5. Lady Bell, op. cit., Vol.2, p.585

6. F.O.371/5229/10440, dated 11th September 1920

7. Nāji and Nuri were most active. It was reported 'the Sharifian Party have won the support of the Mujtahidin who would turn the scale on the Euphrates, whose opinion is already opposed to Talib'. Intelligence Report 10-11. Also al Istiqlāl, 17th November 1920, 17th December 1920, al 'Irāq, 11, 12 and 23rd May 1921, and 14th June 1921; Dijla, 10 and 11th August 1921.

8. F.O.371/6351/6185. Intelligence Report No.11, 15th April 1921. 'A preliminary communication'.

9. F.O.406/46/5408. Churchill to Prime Ministers, 14th March 1921

10. Ibid.

to argue 'Of course ... political conditions involve Feisal solution for Iraq'.¹ Churchill clarified his point:

'Situation is complicated by variety of claimant to throne, several of whom are quite impossible, and none of whom affords a prospect of suitable Arab Government capable of relieving our military commitments'.²

Cox agreed and pointed out that 'Faisal's previous experience during the war placed him in the best position for raising an Army quickly'.³ Churchill argued that a strong argument in favour of Sharifian policy was intended to serve Britain in other Arab areas.⁴ Miss Bell agreed and pointed out that 'the only pan-Arab propaganda which was at all likely to make headway was the Sharifian propaganda. It was much better to turn this to our own use than to leave it as a potential enemy'.⁵ Such an estimation of Faisal's political capabilities was confirmed by Balfour who wrote:

'... If however /Faisal/ is not put in Haddad practically told me in so many words that Faisal, his family and party would do all they could to make trouble for us throughout the Middle East ... Their position in Mecca would make this only too easy. Taking it all around it does look rather as if Faisal were indicated for the job. We undoubtedly owe him something - he will be a great bore if he remains a disappointed man'.⁶

It was as early as February 1920 that the War Office had suggested the following advantages of 'Faisal's appointment to Irak':

'(i) Enhancement of the Good name of Great Britain. (ii) Religious acceptability both to Shi'ahs and Sunnis. (iii) Accustomed to British methods of administration. (iv) Hostility to Bolshevism. (v) Probable cessation of Hussein's intrigue with Mustapha Kemal ... (vi) Steadying effect on the Middle East'.⁷

It was a complicated combination of this understanding; of Britain's own interests and of the dedicated struggle of the Iraqi independence movement, that the road was paved for the establishment of an Iraqi 'independent'

1. Ibid., Churchill to Prime Minister, 16th March 1921

2. Ibid., Churchill to Prime Minister, 18th March 1921

3. Air 5/829. Minutes of Cairo Conference. Appendix 6 - Mesopotamia: Political. 1st Meeting of the Political Committee, 12th March 1921, p.40

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p.41

6. S.A. Durham, Box 303. Note by F.C.C. Balfour in Autumn 1920.

7. W.O. 33/988. The Proposed kingdom of Mesopotamia. Memo by General Staff, War Office, 17th February 1920

kingdom. Such a solution was to satisfy some moderate nationalists and at the same time to retain a predominant British influence. Gertrude Bell summed up an aspect of irony involved in such a solution when she wrote 'First we imprison them for saying they want Abdullah and then we encourage them to ask for Faisal'.¹ Between the two attitudes there was the Iraqi rising of 1920. Whatever this movement might be considered, it remains a turning point in the whole history of contemporary Iraq.

1. Lady Bell (ed)., op. cit., Vol.2, p.595, dated 8th May 1921

A P P E N D I X I (1)

GERTRUDE BELL INTERVIEW WITH KING FAISAL

On Jan. 14 I had two hours talk with Sidi Faisal - I think I have now come nearer to the very centre of his mind. I began by telling him that Yasin Pasha had dined with me the night before and that I was much attracted by him but feeling that I was very far from understanding him. The King replied that he himself had never felt that he had any real knowledge of him. He had joined the Arab cause after the occupation of Syria and had at once ousted Ja'far from the command of the Army. At that time the Arab Army was a very real factor. The tribal elements had been in being for several years and were almost regulars, it was also very well found in munitions and other equipment. Almost immediately after the Armistice Sidi Faisal had himself gone to Europe. When he returned after an interval of eight or nine months the original army no longer existed. Yasin had disbanded it on the plea that he would create a wholly new organisation. The equipment also had disappeared, but of the new organisation there was no sign. Yasin was absorbed in politics entirely engaged in combating the French menace persuaded that the Arab State would never put up a disciplined force to resist the French and that it must therefore rely on irregular bands to harass the French at every possible point. These he was occupied in creating at the same time delivering exasperating pinpricks at the French which Sidi Faisal was powerless to prevent. It was quite true, as I had said that he was at the bottom of the hostilities against us at Dair. Sidi Faisal was once more in Europe and heard the news with despair. The negotiations with the French were going badly, America had dropped out of the picture, he had no friend in the world but the British Government and there were his men making war against the British on the Euphrates. When he came back to Syria in the early Spring of 1920 he expostulated with Yasin

1. Gertrude Bell letters and papers, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

who replied that the Euphrates business had got out of hand against his will. He had understood that we were on the point of evacuating Dair and had sent Ramadhan el Shallash to Raqqah (he being a native of those parts) with orders that when we left he was to take over. Ramadhan had at once set himself up as O.C. Euphrates and occupied Dair while we were still in possession.

I explained how the order for evacuation had come from the War Office a month earlier how the telegram was undecipherable and had been three times repeated with such delay that we had not understood the order until Ramadhan el Shallash had made his move. Sidi Faisal said that he could not understand how the Arabs were aware of the projected evacuation before we in Iraq had got the order clearly, but if I remember rightly the news had come to Syria via Egypt.

Sidi Faisal returned to Syria in Jan. and went to Aleppo intending to go himself to Dair and clear up the matter but the tension with the French was so acute that he was obliged to return to Damascus. He found it impossible to restrain the Iraq Officers. On the one hand A.T. Wilson had so strongly opposed their return to their own country that except by stealth they could not go back on the other the Syrians were exhibiting a jealous hatred of them which prevented them from finding a livelihood in Syria.

"Are we who fought for the Arab cause" they exclaimed "to die of hunger?"

The sole alternative was to fight their way back to the Iraq and they proceeded to do so, who can blame them?

Turning to wider aspects of the Arab question, Sidi Faisal said that the Arab cause was lost when America withdrew her interest in it. When he came to London after the Armistice in his first interview with Lloyd George the latter said to him that it was impossible for the British Government to disapprove the ardent desire of France for the Syrian Mandate but America

could do it. He advised him to hitch his chariot to the star of President Wilson at that time blazing in the political firmament, and there was little doubt that by this means Syria would be dragged out of the morass. Faisal followed his advice to the letter. During the whole time that he was in Paris during 1919 he concentrated his efforts on the American delegation.

I said that I had done the same during the month that I had been there and had found the delegation wholly sympathetic, unfortunately it had no hold on public opinion in America. I reminded him of the last talk I had had with him in John's studio. I had told him that I believed that no power on earth would make France relinquish the Syrian Mandate. He had received this opinion with surprise and dismay. I had gone straight from this interview to lunch with Mr. Balfour and after lunch when the other guests had left had related my conversation with Faisal and reiterated my conviction regarding the attitude of the French. Mr. Balfour, characteristically had told me that while I was not to imagine that he was speaking officially, he could assure me in a purely private capacity that he was in agreement with me. Thereupon I begged him to clear Faisal's mind of illusions; if it was certain, as I thought that he would never oppose French ambitions, Faisal should be clearly and officially informed so that he might shape his course accordingly. Mr. Balfour thereupon summoned Ian Malcolm and said "Ian will you make a note of what she says so that I may not forget to acquaint Lloyd George". Ian producing an exquisite notebook from an impeccable pocket had made the desired entry - and I feeling that Ian's notebook was the epitome of all culs de sac, had left Paris a day or two later.

Faisal then referred to Lord Allenbury's irruption with the Paris conference which occurred while I was there. The principle of an international enquiry with the wishes of the Syrian people had been imposed by him, the British, Italian and American delegates had been at once appointed why had it never materialised? I heard the answer to this question. The French

had met the proposition in the simplest manner: they had never appointed delegates. The British, Italian and American representatives had lingered on for months finally the Americans had gone alone and their report had never seen the light of day. Faisal interposed that when the American delegates (Mr. Crain and his colleague) had arrived in Syria he had telegraphed to Lord Allenby and asked him whether they should be considered as an official and responsible delegation. Lord Allenby had replied emphatically in the affirmative and the Syrians had acted accordingly. I replied that Lord Allenby had all along been actuated by the politicians. His scheme of an international enquiry was still born if it had taken place (and the French had frustrated it from the outset) it would have been productive of no result. The British and American Delegates would certainly have given a true report of the feelings of the Syrian people but the French would have suborned the Italian representatives to subscribe to a report in the contrary sense. The result would have been a draw - and the French would have carried on. That was my conviction. I added that in my opinion there were scarcely words strong enough to express my sense of our responsibility for the Syrian disaster.

Faisal then said: "This is how I viewed the Arab question. I thought we must begin with the Hijaz. A firm alliance between the British Government and the Hijaz was my cornerstone - upon which I intended to build up an alliance between myself in Syria and you. I put the Iraq aside. Whatever A.T. Wilson might do I was assured that the policy of your Government was to set up a National Government in the Iraq - I was content to wait. My father destroyed my hope that the radiating point should be the Hijaz; to this day he has not ratified the treaty with you; you deserted me in Syria - it is therefore incumbent upon me to form a new scheme. You must remember that I stood and I stand, entirely alone. I have never had the support of my father or my brother 'Abdullah'. They were both bitterly

jealous of the position which the successful issue of the Arab campaign had given me in Syria. When I was summoned to Europe after the Armistice, I was so conscious of their feelings towards me that I begged my father to send my brother Abdullah to Paris instead of myself. He refused but it was not because I had the confidence of my family. I have never had it. Do you realise why it was that in March 1920 I encouraged the handful of Iraqis in Syria to nominate my brother Abdullah King of the Iraq? I knew that the whole business was laughable, but I gave it my countenance in order to appease my own brother. He is as you know older than I am - I wanted to give him a status in the Arab world in order to disarm his hostility. He and my father never cared to accuse me of working solely in my own personal interest. What did it matter to me whether I or another were King of Syria? My task was to obliterate family dissensions and therefore I encouraged the nomination of my brother Abdullah to the Iraq. I knew that it was absurd; I received the sharpest rebuke from Lord Curzon; But I believed and until 1921 I believed that your policy with regard to Arab aspirations was that they were inseparably connected with the Sharifian family. My father, as I have said, has disconnected the Hijaz; Transjordan is nothing - I must form a new Arab ideal. Where shall I begin? ! !

I replied: "You must begin with the Iraq we are pledged to the establishment of a Native Government here, if the people consent to accept our help in the comparatively easy conditions which we impose. The Iraq, not the Hijaz is the radiating point, and it is better so, because the Iraq has its eyes fixed on development on modern lines whereas the Hijaz is a state and moreover an arid desert. Both economic and spiritual development are therefore barred.

The King continued: "I must tell you exactly how I saw the Arab question. I tried first to get a hearing for the Syrian people - you knew what their wishes were. My father's unreasonableness was always my greatest

difficulty while I was in Paris in 1919 he was continually urging me to force the Allies to fulfil their promises to the Arabs. I did not even know what the promises were - I had never seen the correspondence with MacMahon. But in any case to force the Allies was out of the question. What power had I? what wealth? I could only reason and negotiate. That was what I did. I continued to do so when I was left face to face with the French. I was persuaded that sooner or later a rupture must come - they were bent on it. My sole idea was to postpone it sufficiently to give me time to consolidate Arab institutions in Syria. Then if I felt I should have something behind me which they would find it difficult to obliterate. But I was not given time; my hand was forced by my own followers and when I went everything disappeared with me".

As he spoke I had a picture of what that time must have been like. Sidi Faisal, with his high ideals, his fair conception of the Arab cause which he alone represented and defended - acutely, too acutely, sensitive to sympathy or political antagonism trying to hold his own against the covert hostility of the French and the ardent folly of his own adherents; harassed by his family, deserted by the British Government in which he had placed implicit reliance without one single person near him from whom he could seek affectionate and impartial guidance - what chance had he of finding an issue to a situation which was almost insoluble. The part we played in the drama was one which with anyone less generous than he should have earned for us permanent distrust, and if now we are called upon to show him infinite patience and forbearance, we may reckon these attributes as but an inadequate recognition of our previous shortcomings - we betrayed him and he has not only forgiven the betrayal but has continued to trust us. It is a great deal more than we deserve.

A P P E N D I X . I I (1)

The Carlton Hotel,

LONDON. S.W.1

5th April, 1920

My dear Major Young,

At your request I am stating what, in my opinion, were the causes that brought into being the Mesopotamian Congress with its declarations and decisions. This statement has no pretensions to contain more than a hurried sketch of the facts of the situation that presented themselves to me and a few remarks and suggestions arising from them.

Soon after the Armistice Turkish propaganda became very active in the northern part of the country, and its emissaries, taking advantage of the vexed conditions arising from the unpopular military administration, succeeded by accusations against the British in influencing a small section of the people, alienating their sympathies and ranging them once more on their side. At some places it attained such dimensions as to give to some of the British Officials on the spot the wrong impression that there was a strong responsible party in the Arab countries desirous of reinstating the Turk. The people were certainly very much excited over the rumours disseminated broadcast that, after all the sacrifices made, Mesopotamia along with Syria was to be partitioned and colonised. Agitators were not slow to assert, with seeming justification, that it would be preferable to have maintained even such a malignant authority as the Turk had over the country in order to safeguard its unity and such national rights as were conceded under the old régime.

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In 1918 I presented to the British Government, through the medium

of Colonel Cornwallis, then D.P.O. at Damascus, a long memorandum on the state of the country setting forth at that time my views of the causes of unrest and venturing a few recommendations for the amelioration of the conditions. I said the minds of the people of Mesopotamia were greatly disturbed by the adoption on the part of the military administration of ways and means ill adapted to the conditions obtaining there from centuries, and that, in my opinion, the only remedy for restoring public confidence, successfully combatting the nefarious outside influences and bridging the gulf that I felt was widening between the British Officials and the population - objects which I had much at heart - was the immediate creation of a national civil administration under the supervision of the Occupation. I, too, well knew how the Turks would benefit from such conditions as prevailed then and unfortunately still to a large extent prevail now. From previous experience I was sure that the Turks meant the country no good or they would not have, before the war, persecuted and condemned every Arab patriot who, like myself, had to seek safety in concealment and flight.

I sincerely regret that nothing was done on those lines and matters were allowed to drift. In consequence a few unscrupulous individuals, always ready to serve their ends at the expense of the public, took advantage of the general discontent to misrepresent the causes and by insinuations succeeded in ingratiating themselves with a considerable number of high officials and in securing a very large share of the public offices. The actions of those officials were, in all cases, supported by this class regardless of their bad effects on the general interest. It is significant to note that many of the most respected and competent notables who were invited to take office refused to serve under an authority founded on principles (that is military) at variance with their own and invariably asked for the formation of a national civil administration as a condition of their support. Their warnings against the danger of the continuance

of the system were not heeded. Accusations were preferred against some of them who ultimately were exiled the country.

From such a situation as held then and still holds now none but enemies could reap benefit. This they were not slow to realise and succeeded beyond their hopes in seeing troubles break out in certain parts particularly in the north in the neighbourhood of Mosul and Deir-ez-zour.

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The majority of the members of the Mesopotamian Congress is made of those who fought by the side of the British against the common enemy and is as strongly opposed to the prolongation of any misunderstandings and differences between the people of Irak and their allies as to the resumption of any understanding and co-operation with the Turks. In their eagerness to avert more incidents and stem the current of disaffection the Congress was unanimous in their conviction that the means most effectual for that purpose was to conform to the wishes of the people which are in perfect harmony with the intentions and promises of the British Government. They declared the independence of Mesopotamia, fully confident that their action will be received with approval and encouragement.

I am not a member of this Congress, but I am intimately acquainted with the majority of its members, among whom I am satisfied there is not one who holds any unfriendly views of our allies, the British, or will lend themselves to create embarrassments for them in dealing with the Irakians. On the contrary, they are one and all imbued with the spirit of comradeship with the British and are most anxious to continue on the path of loyalty and collaboration with them, and, in a special manner, they are determined to put an end to all the motives that may tend to renew the connection with the Turks.

The Mesopotamia Congress was formed in the following way: The

notables of Mosul and Baghdad by powers of attorney and a considerable number of the tribal chiefs by special letters which are now in the archives of the Congress, authorised six persons at Damascus to act in their name and in their behalf in all matters relating to the determination of the future of the country with insistence on independence. The following are the six deputies:-

H.R.H. Emir Faisal; Jaafar Pasha El-Askari, leader of the Arab Army with the E.E.F.; Naji Sowaidi; Muloud Pasha Mukhlis; El-Hashimi; and Colonel Ali Jaudat.

Also the Arab national committees in Mesopotamia established like other numerous committees in every Arab country in pre-war times for the purpose of defending the rights of the Arabs against Turkish encroachments (it was these committees who decreed the Arab uprising against Turkey in 1915), authorised a few Irakians in Syria and sent other agents from among their numbers in Mosul, Baghdad and Nejef to represent them at the Congress.

No representatives attended from Basra as there was no time to wait for their arrival from such a distant centre.

It is my conviction, and I do not hold such extreme views on the Arab question as to cloud my reading of the signs of the times, from direct experience in Mesopotamia before the war, constant contact with the majority of Irakians arriving lately in Syria and private correspondence from reliable sources in Irak, that the Congress as composed completely and indubitably represented the views and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants.

The severity of the military administration in Mesopotamia has so far prevented the manifestation of the people's desires on the question of their future and to the casual observer who only skims the surface with

unpenetrating eyes the national sentiment does not clearly appear as a factor. But there is a strong latent sentiment dearly cherished in every breast and a determination that nothing short of a national administration of an independent character will be willingly accepted.

In the course of the next few days I hope to place in your hands the original text of the declaration made by the Congress. Now only a brief summary of its contents can be given.

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1. Independence was declared as the right of the Mesopotamians as an allied people capable of managing their own affairs.

2. Emir Abdullah, second son of His Majesty King Hussein, a strong anti-Turk and the leader of the Army against the Turks in the Hijaz, was proclaimed King of Mesopotamia.

3. No rigid barriers, political or economical, can be allowed to be raised between Mesopotamia and Syria.

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As regards the rights of the Irakians to independence, no remarks are necessary to make it any clearer, and the Proclamation of Emir Abdullah as King is, in my opinion, a justice done to the patriotic and religious sentiments of the whole people in town and country. The sunnis will gladly hail him, the son of the Prophet, as ruler and king, and the Shiahs will be greatly gratified to become subjects of a true descendant of their chief Imam Ali Ibn Abi Taleb. This for them is a historical event that will range as the consummation of the long deferred hopes.

A slight diversion may be allowed here to say a few words about the assembly of the notables of Mesopotamia held in Baghdad in 1918 for recording the wishes of the country regarding its future government. The absence of unanimity about the subject is not held by those who are well

acquainted with the thoughts of the people and the conditions under which the Assembly was summoned as a proof of disunion. These men were practically taken by surprise and had no opportunity to discuss the subject at large before the question was put to them. It is now asserted on sure ground that the same notables would give a great majority assent to an independent monarchy under Emir Abdullah.

Mosul is an integral part of Mesopotamia and must, in Mesopotamia's interest, continue to be so under one and the same independent national administration. Otherwise it will declare for Syria and share its fortunes.

The following reasons may be mentioned for maintaining the widest open door between Syria and Mesopotamia:

(a) Both countries, in addition to their being inhabited by one people, have one and the same enemy beyond their northern frontiers, and it is imperative that their system of defence in that quarter be unified in order to safeguard their vital interests against the common peril of invasion.

(b) A considerable number of tribes regularly migrate and re-migrate from one country to the other in certain periods every year. For them there is, and from time immemorial there was, no frontiers between the two areas.

(c) The community of a very large part of their economical interests dependent on transportation by the existing and future railways, and the joint use of the Euphrates River preclude the raising of any commercial barriers between Syria and Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia's access to the Mediterranean lies through Syria.

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The Government of the country, it is understood, will be a monarchy of a constitutional character with representative institutions for the towns and settled parts. For the tribal areas a special administration will be

set up and one of its primary objects will be to encourage the tribes to settle down permanently on the land and become cultivators so that in the not very far future the change from a wandering to a sedentary life will have been completed as to allow the extension of the representative system to all parts of the country.

For the purpose of arranging this and other matters between Syria and Mesopotamia and to consult on questions of common interest politically as well as economically a mixed commission appointed from year to year will be found necessary. But with the Hijaz no political co-operation is contemplated. Arrangements will, however, have to be made with regard to the Pilgrimage question and religious establishments belonging to the Mecca and Medinah shrines.

With regard to the Kurdish minority to the North-East of Mosul, who are Sunni Moslems by religion and a large part of whom use the Arabic as well as their native language, it is not expected that they will object to becoming subjects of a Sunni Moslem King. Moreover, their economical interests are essentially involved with those of Mosul and Baghdad. And, as in the case of the Arab tribal area, it will be desirable to provide them with a special administration.

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There is not, as far as I know, any denial of, or antagonism to Britain's interests in Mesopotamia and all seem to be agreed that they should be safeguarded. The quality and extent of the collaboration that will be maintained with Britain is sure to be decided by friendly agreement between the British and the National Government of Mesopotamia.

As regards the Persian Gulf, I am not acquainted with the views of the British Government on its defence. But if there is still any necessity

for them to pursue a well defined policy on this question I venture to suggest the appointment of a military Anglo-Arab Commission for dealing with it.

In conclusion I take the liberty once more to suggest that an Anglo-Arab Commission be immediately appointed to visit Mesopotamia and study on the spot the urgent needs of the country and to institute a National Administration within the Occupation, so that as soon as the future is determined and the army begins to retire the administration will be in readiness to take over the Government and assume full responsibility. This, in my humble opinion, is the best cure for the present ills caused by mutual suspicions and misunderstandings.

Yours faithfully,

Nuury

Said

APPENDIX III

NUMBER OF IRAQI STUDENTS (BOYS), SCHOOLS AND POPULATION IN 1919¹

Division	Sunnah	Shi'ah	Jews	Caldan	Protestant	Armenian	Old Syrian	Syrian Catholic	Roman Catholic	Sabian	Yazidi	No. of Schools	Total	Population of Division
Dair al Zor	121		2	6				6				1	135	60,000
Dulaim	260								2			5	262	250,000
Samarra	167	31										4		37,000
Hillah	97	371	3									6	471	173,000
Diwaniyah	69	214	15									2	288	200,000
Shamiyah & Najaf		166										2	166	190,000
Baghdad	639	168	?		2				1			8	810	250,000
Ba'qubah	185	138										5	323	55,000
Khaniqin	88	10	61									3	159	38,000
Kut al Amarah	77	234	23	1		1			6			4	342	106,000
Amarah	82	99	28						12	48		3	269	300,000
Muntafiq	52	124	11						3	14		3	204	327,000
Basrah	367	39	7						2			4	415	114,000
Kirkuk	256	37	5	5								4	303	92,000
Sulaimaniyah	102			4								2	106	155,000
Mosul & Arbil	728	34	175	325	5	21	251	228	6		5	19	1,778	545,000
Qurnah	18	60										1	78	50,000
TOTAL	3,308	1,725	330	341	7	22	251	234	32	62	5	76	6,317	3,288,000

1. C.O.696.2. Department of Education, Administration Report 1919, p.8

APPENDIX IV¹

- A. The names of those who were elected and signed the 'nationalist' petition in Baghdad with some details given on them by the British Administration
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1. Sheikh Sa'id Naqshabandi. Sunni. Mudarris (teacher) at 'Admiyah. Well-known man.
 2. Saiyd Ibrāhīm al Rāwī. Sunni. Well-known man. Not at heart anti-British.
 3. Aḥmed Shawāf. Sunni. Fairly well known man. Bigoted Moslem.
 4. 'Abdal Karīm al Saiyd Ḥāider. Wakīl (agent) of Saiyd Ismā'īl al Ṣadar who is a very important Mujtahid of Khādhemain. Signed the anti-British madhbata (petition) under pressure. His Wakil necessarily followed his lead. Shi'i.
 5. 'Abdal Rahman pasha Ḥāideri. Sunni. Head of one of the leading families of Baghdad. Five of his houses have been requisitioned for billets.
 6. 'Abdal Wahāb al Nāib. Sunni. Brother of No. 1. Man of importance. Judge of Peace Court. Much esteemed as a teacher of Moslem Law.
 7. Jewād al Muṣlāwī. Shi'i. Auctioneer. Scarcely known.
 8. Aḥmed al Dhāher al Ḥāji. Shi'i. A minor 'Alim.
 9. Saiyd Ismā'īl al Wā'dh. Sunni. Active member of C.U.P.
 10. 'Abdallah al Shāwī. Sunni. Junior member of a good Baghdad family. President of the Court of Appeal at Khādhemain under the Turks.
 11. Mahdi Khaṣeki. Shi'i. Contractor.
 12. Tāhir b Muḥammad Salīm. Sunni. Unknown man.
 13. Kādhim al Ḥāji Dāwd. Shi'i. Uncle of No. 35. No importance.
 14. Sulīmān al Sennawī. Sunni. Clerk of the Qādhī in the Shari'a Court.
 15. Saiyd Muḥammad Ḥusseīn Millāwī. Shi'i. Small merchant.
 16. 'Abdallah Salīm al Ḥāideri. Sunni. A relative of No. 5, was Naqib of Kerbela under the Turks. (?)
 17. 'Abdal Wahāb al Saiyd Ḥāider. Shi'i. Small merchant.
 18. Mulla Qāsim. Sunni. Was Mudarris and member of the Waqf Committee under the Turks. Fanatical Moslem. His father has a leather shop in the Bazaar.
 19. Saiyd Ḥusseīn al Saiyd 'Isa. Shi'i. Small merchant and landowner.

1. F.O.882/23/MES/19/6, 'Self Determination in Mesopotamia', Baghdad, 22nd February 1919. Appendix II Analysis of signatories of the combined Sunni and Shi'ah petition, pp. 45-50.

20. 'Abdal Amīr al Saiyd Ḥaīder. Shi'i. Small merchant.
21. Ḥājī 'Abdal Ḥussein Kubba. Shi'i. A member of a well-known family.
22. Ahmed Charchafichi. Shi'i. Merchant. Family is well known.
23. Saiyd 'Adāi al Saiyd Jawāher. Shi'i. Small merchant.
25. Muzāhem b Muḥammad Nuri Pasha. Sunni. He was living in Hillah and was regarded by the P.O. (Hillah) as objectionable and constrained to live in Baghdad.
26. Khālīd al Shābender. Sunni. Related to Ḥājī Ali Alusi.
27. Dhāfir al Zahāwi. Sunni. Belongs to one of the leading families in which his uncle Jamil (see Appendix C) is the best known member. Landlord. Was intimidated by the son of 'Abdal Wahab (6) and induced to sign.
28. Ahmed Munir. Sunni. Katib in the 'Adhimiyah mosque.
29. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Bāchahchi. Sunni. Belongs to one of the leading families, of which Musa Bachahchi (C) is the best known member. Was a member of the Court of First Instance under the Turks.
30. Saiyd 'Abdal Ridhā al Saiyd Yehyā. Shi'i. Merchant.
31. Muḥammad al Muṣṭafā al Khalaf. Sunni.
32. Nāji 'Abdal Ghani Kubba. Shi'i. One of the leading Shi'ah in Baghdad.
33. Ja'far abu Timman al Ḥājī Dāwd. Shi'i. One of the leading Shi'ah merchants of Baghdad. Is on Municipal and educational Committees.
34. 'Abdal Ḥaḡi. Sunni. Mutawalli (caretaker) of the 'Adhimiyah mosque. Friendly to Europeans ... followed the stream.
35. Muḥammad b Sultān Aghā. Sunni. Small landowner Mudīr in the Revenue Department.
36. Muḥammad Arfeli. Sunni. Landowner. Well known family.
37. Ḥamid b 'Abdal Ridhā. Shi'i.
38. Ḥamid b Ḥājī Ḥussein. Shi'i.
39. Muḥammad Rshīd al Saiyd 'Isa. Shi'i. Small landowner.
40. Saiyd 'Ali al Saiyd Ḥussein Shekara. Shi'i. Small merchant.
41. 'Abd al Latīf al Mudallal. Sunni. Owns a bath.
42. Saiyd Muḥammad al Saiyd Muḥsin. Shi'i. Small merchant.
43. Darwīsh 'Ali Ḥaīder. Shi'i. Small merchant.
44. Ḥussein al Ḥājī 'Alāwi. Shi'i. Small merchant.
45. Ḥājī 'Abdal Ḥussein al Baḥrāni. Shi'i. Small merchant.

46. 'Ali al Bāzirkān. Sunni. His father was a Qawam in the Commercial Court. Ex-member of C.U.P.
47. Hamdi Bāchahchi. Sunni. Junior member of well-known family. "Agitator and intriguer".

B. The Sunni counter-petition (Unelected and pro-British)

1. Qāssim Pasha Khudaīri. Runs the Khudaīri firm. The biggest Moḥammadan merchant in Baghdad.
2. Moḥammad Nāji Khudaīri. Big merchant.
3. Mula Muṣṭafa al Ḥāji Ibrāhīm. Merchant.
4. Ḥāji Khalīl al Ḥāji Ibrāhīm. Merchant.
5. Ibrāhīm Aḥmedal Suwaīdi. Merchant of the distinguished Suwaīdi family of which its head is Yusuf al Suwaīdi.
6. Aḥmed al Shuṭab. Merchant.
7. 'Abdal Jebbār Ghulām. Head of the Mukhtars of Baghdad. Not one of the Ashraf but an influential man in his own walk of life.
8. Muḥammad b Ḥāji Shehāb. Merchant.
9. 'Ali al Ḥusseīn. Sheikh of the granary owners of Baghdad.
10. Saiyd Muṣṭafa Berzanji. Member of the famous Kurdish family of Saiyds. His father is Imam in the Mosque of Abdul Qadir Kailāni.

C. Counter petition of Sunni Ashraf (Pro-British)

1. 'Abdal Raḥman Jamīl Zādah. Head of the house. Very wealthy landowner.
2. Fākher al Dīn Jamīl Zādah. Very wealthy landowner.
3. Jamīl Sedqi Zehāwī. Best known man in the influential Zehāwī family. Ex-Deputy for Baghdad and the most distinguished man of letters in Mesopotamia. Free thinker.
4. 'Abdal Majīd Shāwī. Head of the Shāwī family and of high reputation. Held official positions under the Turks and served under us (British) on the Waqf Committee.
5. Musa Chalabi Bāchahchi. Most prominent member of his house. Very wealthy landlord. Held high official positions under the Turks but resigned after the constitution. Hates and fears the C.U.P.
6. Ṣālīḥ Ḥilli. Head of his family. Held high office under the Turks. Member of the Liberal Committee. Was government agent under British administration. Representative of the Direction of the Waqf Committee.
7. 'Abdal Karīm Chalabi. Wealthy family. Held office under the Turks and employed by the British in the education department. His son was banished by the Turks to Constantinople.

APPENDIX (V)¹

Circulated by the Secretary of State for India

SECRET

MESOPOTAMIAN ADMINISTRATION

Memorandum by Secretary of State for India

There are two points connected with the administration of Mesopotamia which have bulked very largely in recent discussions, and on which I wish to offer a few remarks. One is the cost of the army, the other the so-called 'Indianisation' of the administration.

(1) We are all agreed that the cost of the Army is excessive. The point with which I want to deal is the suggestion that the army of occupation, if the area to be occupied is not reduced, must cost what it costs now. The present strength (including the troops in North-West Persia) is two divisions, five infantry brigades, and one cavalry brigade. Successive Commanders-in-Chief have estimated that, if all went well, a reduction to one division, plus one cavalry and one infantry brigade, or even less, would eventually be possible. But in the meantime the fighting value of the larger force is, I am informed, no greater than that of the smaller one. Many battalions are being used to guard Turkish prisoners and Assyrian refugees. All regiments are more or less below strength - when it was necessary to reinforce the force in North-West Persia a few weeks ago the two battalions sent up numbered only 300 men each - owing to the demands on them for administrative services. All this is abnormal, and, it is to be hoped, temporary; money is being spent for which no military return is being received, and which it will no longer be necessary to spend when the administration settles down. Again, the administrative services, which are not really military in their nature, not only use up troops, but are in themselves enormously costly. The General Officer Commanding thinks it necessary to maintain a huge Inland Water Transport Department. The wage bill alone of this Department is over 200,000l. a month

and Lord Inchcape, in his report to the Minister of Munitions, wrote that, from what he had heard, the fleet being retained by the military administration "is much in excess of what might be considered a reasonable reserve If the fleet were disposed of, a very expensive establishment could be demobilised."

I more than suspect that the whole of the military administration is run on a similarly lavish scale. "It is a sin and a shame," writes a very competent observer privately to a friend, "that money should be wasted in the way that it is here. Practically nothing is being done to build permanent, or temporary, quarters for people of less consideration, but practically anybody can get a car when he likes to go six miles to the Sporting Club and back. The streets are still crowded at all times of the day with motor vehicles containing officers with their wives. Reductions are being effected in the strength of units, but these swollen administrative staffs, living under conditions far more luxurious than they will ever see again, even if they go to Simla or Delhi, remain. We have an effective strength of about a division and a quarter, which is divided up for the purpose of administration into two divisions, and two lines of communication areas - all of them with large staffs, with an enormous General Headquarters on top." These conditions will be aggravated if the desire of the Imperial General Staff (which the General Officer Commanding has not asked for) to send three more brigades from India is persisted in; and it is conditions like these that are making our rule unpopular with the people, whose habits are disturbed and whose houses are occupied by the military. I receive constant representations on this subject. Again, the hill station which has been established in Persian territory - and to which the General Officer Commanding and the whole of the Headquarters Staff and heads of departments withdrew on the outbreak of trouble in the Mosul vilayet last month, leaving only a Lieutenant-Colonel to represent them at Baghdad, the seat of government - is an example of what I believe to be wholly unnecessary expenditure. At all events it has caused

very unfavourable comments in Baghdad, and Sir A. Wilson tells me that he has had to use his influence to dissuade the Chamber of Commerce from making a public protest against what they consider to be extravagant and wasteful expenditure in this and other respects.

I am most anxious to support the Secretary of State for War in his desire to reduce the expenditure and the army, but before it is decided that the former cannot be reduced without reducing or withdrawing the latter, I suggest that a searching enquiry should be instituted into present methods of military expenditure.

(2) I am not quite sure what 'Indianisation' is intended to mean. But I take it to mean that a direct administration has been set up on the model of India, and even manned by Indians - that we are, in fact governing Mesopotamia as though it were an Indian province. And the argument is that this involves a costly administration, which involves heavy taxation, which in turn brings in its train the unrest of which Mesopotamia is now supposed to be the scene. Ergo, get rid of Sir A.T. Wilson and peace and contentment will reign once more. Now for the facts.

With the progress of our victorious armies the existing Turkish administration disappeared. Though not a bad system on paper, it was entirely inefficient in practice. Nevertheless it had given to the dwellers in towns some semblance of Civilisation. There were law courts, from which there was an appeal to Constantinople; and there was an electoral system under which not only municipalities were worked, but members were sent to the Turkish Parliament. The Iraq was, in fact, a part - like any other - of the Ottoman Empire. But all this collapsed, because the higher officials were exclusively Turks and fled, and the minor Arab officials - who either were Turkish in sympathies or were not sure that the Turk would not return - also disappeared. It was necessary to replace the machinery by something else - for two reasons.

First, because we could not give the inhabitants, of whom we posed as the liberators, a worse administration than they had endured before. Second, because it would have been impossible to conduct a campaign in a country given over to chaos - security was necessary on the lines of communications, and the army had as far as possible to feed itself. I mention these points because, obvious though they are, they are often forgotten. But to create a new administration there existed practically no material but what we brought with us - and that consisted mainly of British officers from India and Indian subordinates. Every effort has been made to get officials from Egypt and the Soudan - the Judicial Secretary and the Director of Education come from the former: but there was no large reserve to draw upon, except in India. Nevertheless the Turkish system has been maintained in its main features - except that of inefficiency. It would not be surprising if men, whose administrative experience had been Indian tended to work to an Indian model and to an Indian standard - and I am willing to admit that we have gone further in the direction of efficiency than the Arab State is likely to want to go. But when that admission is made it must be remembered that it is largely for military purposes that this expensive administration was created and that this degree of efficiency has been maintained. The great expansion in the cultivated area, for example, which in turn necessitated an extension of irrigation, was undertaken at army expense in response to an urgent appeal from home to make the army self-supporting. Again, a feature of the present year is to transfer to the civil administration of expensive departments hitherto organised by and for the military authorities, such as railways, ports, docks, river navigation. Departments which exist solely for the benefit of the inhabitants by no means attain the same standard. Education, for example, is notoriously behindhand. Though Arabic is the language of the schools, and for the first time since the Turkish conquest the Shiah majority of the population is getting its due share, it has been impossible to satisfy the demand, because the supply of Arab schoolmasters is wholly

insufficient. Technical education in Baghdad is at a standstill because the military are occupying the only possible buildings, and the prolonged and persistent efforts of the Civil Commissioner have failed to dislodge them. Facts like these caused a Syrian nationalist paper recently to remark in all earnest that the Mesopotamians did not appreciate the blessings of Turkish rule until they had lost them.

But, it is said, your administration is absurdly costly compared with that of the Turks because "it has 450 British executive officers running it, and not a single responsible Mesopotamian. In Turkish days 70 per cent of the executive civil service was local" (Mr. T.E. Lawrence, Times, 23rd July). I cannot say what percentage of the total is represented by the 450 British, though I doubt whether it is as much as 30. But it must be pointed out that the Turks did not employ "a single responsible Mesopotamian." The Turkish subordinate executive service too was almost exclusively Sunni, while the majority of the people are Shiah. It was easier for a foreign Moslem Power to impose a Sunni domination than for ourselves; and the result has been that most of the Sunni employees of the Turks who have remained or returned, are unemployable, while the Shiah, who had no training in or tradition of public life in Turkish times, are not yet generally capable, or are unwilling, to come forward to take their places. Where the material has been available it has been used to the utmost. In the Judicial Department, for example, out of 100 officials six are British and 82 Arab, and for the first time for centuries justice is being administered in the Arabic tongue, and the courts are following the law and customs with which the people are familiar. In this connection it may be noted that Mr. Lawrence's statement that the administration generally is conducted in English is untrue. There is hardly a British officer on the executive staff who is not qualified in colloquial Arabic.

The revenue of Mesopotamia was collected last year at a cost of 16

per cent - not excessive, seeing that in India, after three quarters of a century of settled government, the cost was 13 per cent. No figures are available for a comparison with Turkish times, but it is clear that the Turkish system must have been exceedingly costly. No less than six different departments, with separate establishments, independently collected revenue and remitted it to Constantinople. Moreover, almost all branches of revenue were farmed - a system which is notoriously uneconomical to the State and burdensome to the taxpayer. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that until the last two years before the war there was a deficit in the Mesopotamian budget.

At all events, it is said, the Turks took much less out of the people than you are taking; the Turkish revenue was $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions, and you are taking six. No figures of Turkish revenue are available here, and I am unable to trace the $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions to any higher authority than the Daily Mail. The revenue budgeted for in the current year is about $4\frac{3}{4}$ millions (at 2s. to the rupee). Of this sum $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions are furnished by customs, the rates being the same as under the Turks, and all other heads of revenue combine to make a little over two millions.

In 1919-20 the corresponding figures (at the same rate of exchange) were:- Total revenue 4,142,000 l., customs 2,202,000 l., remaining heads 1,940,000 l. The land revenue in 1919-20 yielded 1,508,000 l., for 1920-21 the estimate is 1,581,000 l. Mr. Ormsby Gore, in his admirable speech in the House of Commons debate, sought to make the point that the revenue had jumped from a little over 1,000,000 l. in 1918-19 to 5,000,000 l. in 1919-20; but he had failed to notice that his figures for 1918-19 were for Baghdad only, while those for 1919-20 were for Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. Can it reasonably be said that a taxation revenue of 2,000,000 l. is excessive for the whole of Mesopotamia? We are told that it is larger than the Turks' revenue, and that is probably true - but the explanation is simple. First, the area

under cultivation is now some 15 per cent or 20 per cent greater than it was in Turkish times. Second, the price of grain is something like 300 per cent higher than it was before the war. In point of fact, the Turkish land revenue assessments have almost everywhere been reduced. In the Hillah division, for example, the Turkish demand was as much as 60 per cent of the gross produce on some classes of land: we have reduced it to 30 per cent or even 25 per cent, with a rebate of 3 per cent, for prompt payment. It is true that in certain areas taxation and control are being imposed on tribes which have never submitted to either. Over the Shamiyeh division, for example, where the recent trouble has been, the Turks had exercised no control for 10 years before the war. But our rate of taxation has always been tempered to the degree of control exercised, and it is noteworthy that the Muntafiks division - from which in the early days no revenue whatever was collected, and on which a demand was made only last year - has not joined in the recent outbreak, and that in the Amarah division such confidence and contentment prevail that the tribesmen have voluntarily surrendered 24,000 rifles. The Arab likes taxation as little as anyone else, but there is no evidence that excessive taxation is one of the contributory causes of the present unrest.

I grant your administration, says Mr. Lawrence: "We had to set up a war-time administration. We had no choice; but that was two years ago, and we have not yet changed to peace conditions. Indeed, there are yet no signs of change." For that, at least, I admit no responsibility either for myself or for Sir Arnold Wilson. Mr. Lawrence perhaps forgets that juridically the position is the same as it was two years ago. Mesopotamia is still Turkish territory, and as such is still administered, under international law, by the army of occupation. It is only two months ago that the mandate was granted to us. Technically, therefore, our attitude has been correct. That it has been in the highest degree inexpedient no one can doubt. More than once since 1917 the Civil Commissioner had pressed for the despatch of a Commission to

examine political conditions on the spot; and for at least a year past it has been perfectly evident that it was essential to make a move in fulfilment of the pledges given by His Majesty's Government. In November last year the India Office put forward a draft sketch of an Arab Government, and urged that an immediate announcement should be made. Though Lord Curzon in his telegram to Sir P. Cox of 14th November agreed - "We are strongly of opinion that something must be said without delay" - it was not until 4th May this year that a formula was arrived at. This was not for lack of reminders on the part of the India Office. On 15th December we had proposed to the Foreign Office to authorise an announcement but by 19th February no reply had been received, and eventually the first step was taken by Sir A. Wilson himself. He had appointed, on his own motion, a committee - presided over by a judicial officer of the Egyptian Service - to draw up a constitution; at the end of April he telegraphed a summary of their recommendations; and he pressed for permission to announce, before Ramazan (when tempers become excited by fasting), that His Majesty's Government provisionally approved them and instructed him to communicate them to the leading inhabitants with a view to giving effect to them in the autumn; the India Office did their best, but Sir A. Wilson received no instructions until the 7th June. In addition to this delay, further delay has been imposed upon his active proposals. Though a late convert to the policy of an Arab Government, he has shown himself anxious energetically to pursue the policy which he has been authorised to announce. Accordingly he proposed to receive Jaafar Pasha from Syria, and to invite a number of Mesopotamian officers of whose natural impatience to take a share in the government Mr. Lawrence reminds us in the Times - to come to Baghdad for consultation regarding the preliminary arrangements. But, at the wish of the Foreign Office, he was immediately restrained, and action of that kind - so important at the present stage - is being held up.

In conclusion, since Sir A. Wilson's administration has suddenly

become the object of hostile - and in my opinion wholly unmerited - criticism, I will quote from a telegram which I sent to him as recently as 7th June, with Lord Curzon's concurrence:- "His Majesty's Government take this opportunity of conveying to you their most cordial and grateful acknowledgments of the high ability and unflagging zeal with which during the past 2½ years you have devoted yourself with such markedly successful results to your difficult and laborious task." Nemo repente fit deterimus!

23rd July 1920

E.S.M.

APPENDIX VI¹

THE FUTURE OF MESOPOTAMIA

(Note by Sir Percy Cox)

1. Before dealing with lesser issues I should like to state the position as I understand it to be at present, to make sure that I start from the right premises.

(i) In the proclamation which we issued on our arrival at Baghdad we announced to the people, and, in the Press, to the world at large, that we came as friends and not as conquerors, to emancipate the inhabitants of the country from the oppressive rule of the Turks, and to assist them to work out their destiny on more auspicious lines. Incidentally we invited them to come forward and take part in the administration.

(ii) In the announcement of policy made by His Majesty's Government in the telegram of 29th March 1917, from the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, it was stated that, whereas it was contemplated that the Basrah Vilayet (as then defined) should "remain permanently under British administration" and annexation was definitely indicated, the Baghdad Vilayet, on the other hand, was to be formed into an Arab State or Province under British protection, in everything but name.

2. During the year that has since elapsed the general situation has undergone considerable development, an important feature of which has been the entry of America into the war, and in the latter connection certain fundamental principles have been enunciated for which America in particular and the other Allies in general are considered to be fighting. Of these principles the one which particularly concerns us at the moment requires that the peoples of the countries interested or affected should be allowed to determine their own form of Government. Recently the Prime Minister has publicly stated that the

destinies of Palestine, Mesopotamia, &c will be decided at the Peace Conference.

3. I gather that it is now proposed to deliberate as to what particular steps or line of action are advisable in order to square our working policy with the above principle and announcements, in case we should have to adhere to them in spite of the fact that Germany has not respected them in dealing with conquered territory in Russia.

4. I assume that, if at the end of the war we find ourselves in a sufficiently strong position, and in effective administrative control, we should still hope to annex the Basrah Vilayet and exercise a veiled protectorate over the Baghdad Vilayet; but it is recognised that the question of annexation has become exceedingly difficult vis-à-vis the President of the United States, who will presumably exercise the most potent influence at the Peace Conference. Our original proposals must consequently be regarded as a counsel of perfection, and we must be prepared to accept something less. At any rate, however, we have the strongest grounds, in view of our assurances to the inhabitants and the millions of money we have sunk in making the Port, for standing out for the annexation of Basrah and from thence to the sea, with a small block of territory necessary to round off the enclave. As regards the rest of the occupied territories, the essential aim must be to effect the complete elimination of Turkish suzerainty, and it is assumed that we shall leave no stone unturned to achieve that end, only tolerating its retention in the last resort.

5. In any case we must set our faces against the admission of the slightest Turkish element or participation in the administration. In this connection, I should mention that when I was in Cairo it was suggested that, as events were shaping, we might be obliged to decide to come to some compromise with Turkey at any moment; I also learnt there of Sherif Faisal's secret overtures to the Turks; and when asked my opinion I expressed the view that if in the last resort we were compelled to come to some compromise with Turkey I did not consider that the retention of nominal Turkish suzerainty need be considered altogether incompatible with the realisation of our practical aims, always provided that the country were safeguarded against the least control or inter-

ference by Turkey in the administration. As cases in point we have the precedent of Egypt and the more pertinent one of Koweit. The fact is that the bulk of the people of the country are not concerned with abstract theories or niceties of international principle; for example, as long as the Shaikh of Koweit feels assured that his interests are under our practical protection, and are safe in our hands, he does not trouble his head as to whether in the distance Turkish suzerainty exists or not. I think the position would be the same in the case of the inhabitants of Iraq, where nine-tenths of them are altogether inarticulate, and all they are concerned with is the manner of their treatment by the Government actually in control of Baghdad. As regards the remaining tenth, who are capable of understanding the real issues, they would, of course, not be completely reassured (supposing that the fiction of Turkish suzerainty were being maintained) unless they were absolutely safeguarded against the participation of Turkey in the administration. I assume, therefore, that we are on common ground in considering that if the Turks were to be allowed to retain the suzerainty of Mesopotamia (minus Basrah) they must, at any rate, be completely eliminated from the administration, and that it must be our mission to ensure that Iraq obtains the administration which the country needs and which her future demands. There must be no Turkish Commissioner and no Turkish flag. A special flag must be devised.

6. Alluding for a moment to the question of relative status, as between the Basrah and Baghdad Vilayets respectively, it is my very definite opinion that a homogeneous administration in all practical aspects is not in any way incompatible with a technical difference of political status, and that it is essential in the interests of the country that the administration of both Vilayets should be uniform, that of the Basrah Vilayet being brought into line with Baghdad in due course.

7. In considering the precise form of the administration there are several alternatives to be weighed in the balance, and attached to each alternative are subsidiary difficulties with need consideration. For the moment

we will consider the Baghdad Vilayet only, on the hypothesis that Basrah Vilayet can be made to conform to it at a convenient juncture.

8. The question of the "Arab façade" offers no insurmountable difficulties to my mind. The essential problem is the determination of status to be assigned to the province of Iraq. It is agreed that the administration should be under British guidance, and the more complete the British control can be, the better for the country. In fact, unless it is assured the country has no future, for it would be impossible to get money for its development unless investors are satisfied that their interests are fully safeguarded, a condition which cannot be assured except under protective British supervision. How is that supervision to be achieved? The most satisfactory solution would seem to be government by a High Commissioner assisted by a Council, formed partly of the Heads of the most important Departments of State, and partly of representative non-official members from among the inhabitants. But the foreign relations of such a government must obviously lie in British hands, and it would thus be practically a British protectorate.

9. If such an arrangement could be achieved and recognised by the Powers, well and good; but if not, then the existence of a titular native ruler would become a necessity. I do not think it would be impossible to find one, but the difficulty is that if the administration were given such a form it might be difficult for it to avoid being hampered by capitulations, and the right to consular representation by Foreign Powers; the former contingency being one which we should obviously do our utmost to escape.

10. If it is decided that we should have a nominal headpiece to the administration to conduct his own foreign affairs under British guidance, I think, as I have said above, that it would be possible to find a local candidate, and I cannot see the least justification or necessity for introducing one of the family of the Sherif of Mecca to play this rôle. I have always ventured to deplore the fact that the discussion of the future of Iraq with the Sherif, as one of the pawns in the negotiations with him, was ever

permitted. I have also expressed my views plainly on the political and practical objections to recognising him as King of Arabia and Sovereign of a group of Confederate States. In my opinion a more reasonable solution would be that he should remain King of Hejaz, and, if desired, have his own representative with Foreign Powers, while the foreign relations of the Iraq State, and of the other confederate Arab Potentates or States, should lie in our hands. For the Arab Ruler of the Iraq State a title might be devised conveying something less than King, e.g. Sultan or Hakim (Ruler), and all the Confederate Rulers would undoubtedly pay appropriate deference to King Hussein as Sherif of the Holy Places in the Hejaz. If considered essential in view of their commitments to the Sherif, His Majesty's Government might even decide to guarantee the payment to him of an annual subsidy in some form from the revenues of Iraq, as recognition of his services to the cause of Arab independence during the war; or, as a religious contribution towards the upkeep of the Holy Places.

II

OBSERVATIONS ON THE MORE DETAILED ISSUES

11. Can any Arab authority, dynastic or representative, be discovered that will command the necessary moral sanction in the country as a whole? What weight does King Hussein or his family carry with the local Arabs?

In my opinion we have the Naqib of Baghdad and his family a dynastic element which would carry the necessary moral sanction, in the Baghdad Vilayet undoubtedly, and, in my opinion, in Iraq as a whole. I believe they could be brought to identify themselves with British interests. The present Naqib himself possesses a very great prestige and influence not only in Mesopotamia but among the Mohammedans of India, and I feel sure his selection as Head of the State would be regarded as an appropriate solution, and be received with favour throughout India as well as Mesopotamia. The Naqib considers himself superior, in purity of descent and nobility, to the Sherif, and no less important, and the

introduction of a relative to the Sherif of Mecca as Head of the State of Iraq would, in my opinion, be greatly misunderstood and resented by the Naqib and his family, and thus tend to alienate our most potent element of influence over the Arabs of Iraq. King Hussein and his family carry no weight in Iraq, where only the most distant interest is taken in him. In the early days of the Sherif's entry into the lists, when the question of giving him military help was being discussed, the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, was asked by the War Office whether the failure or collapse of the Sherif would prejudice our military or political interests in Mesopotamia. We replied after deliberate consideration that the inhabitants had not been at all moved by his successes, and would, in our opinion, regard his failure with complete indifference.

12. What materials exist for setting up a Local Administration or Administrations of a suitable character?

There is adequate Arab or local material available or in the making for the subordinate services of the administration. The difficulty we are confronted with at present, and must be for some time to come, is to find individuals suitable for higher posts in the administration, e.g. Mutessarifs, Qaimaqams, such as would be filled in the Indian administration by gazetted officers - Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners. The reason is that under the Turkish régime almost all these posts were filled by pure Turks; these have been eliminated, and there is at present no one to fill their place. Wherever we have tried ex-officers of the late Administration they have almost invariably proved unsatisfactory; they are in fact saturated with the evil traditions of the régime in which they have been brought up and trained. Until we can create this element, enlisting as far as we are able the assistance of the Egyptian and Soudan Administrations, we must rely mainly on young British officers. I may mention here that whereas I have done my utmost to employ experimentally any inhabitants of the country at all likely to be suitable, this laudable endeavour finds no favour with the local inhabitants concerned.

I am continually appealed to by them not to place the conduct of their affairs in the hands of ex-officials of the late régime, even though they be Arabs of the country, on the ground that they have all been born and bred in a vicious school of corruption, and cannot rise above the evil traditions of the past. The population, from the cultivator to the well-to-do merchant or landowner, infinitely prefers to be handled by a British officer, who of course employs Arab subordinates.

13. I fully realise the importance of finding or creating a type suitable for employment in the superior posts, but the fact is that it does not at present exist. In the more subordinate posts our personnel is almost entirely indigenous. Where other elements, Indian or English, are employed it is almost entirely in the purely clerical or technical branches of the Head-quarter Administration, e.g., clerical and cypher branches, English branch of Government Press, &c. The following is a rough analysis of employees in the Baghdad Vilayet:-

Arab, Armenian, Christian, Jew, ex-employees of the late Government taken over by us	210
Newly sanctioned by us:-	
Mohammedans of Iraq	17
Domiciled Persians of Iraq	16
Jews of Iraq	60
Christians, Syrians, Chaldeans	132
Egyptians	3
Indian Christians	19
British-born Europeans	35
(Government offices, Government Press, &c.)	

14. The highest type of official corresponding to those who function as Heads of Departments and Ministers of State does not exist in Mesopotamia; they will have to be imported.

15. To what extent is the Administration based on Indian models, and to what extent is British supervision indispensable?

Except in that the "Iraq Occupied Territories" Code of Law applied in Basrah is based on English and Indian Law (just as the Soudan Code is) the administration is not in any way based on Indian models. We have taken over the structure of the Turkish administrative system as we found it, substituting

British officers for Mutessarifs, Qaimaqams, &c., but for the present designating them Political Officers and Assistant Political Officers, while, in the posts which, under the Turks, would have been filled by an official of the status of Mudir, we have been able to employ natives of the country subject to the exception that wherever British garrisons or troops are located it is essential, owing to the difficulty of the language question, and the fact that the local product cannot be left to deal with our troops, to use British officers, and we thus require more of them now than will be necessary in the permanent administration after the troops have left. But apart from that, as I have explained above, until we can produce the necessary type of superior Arab official more extensive and close supervision by British officers will continue to be necessary.

16. In my opinion, with the unavoidable exception of the military régime of the Military Governors in the large towns, the administration as carried on in Basrah and Baghdad Vilayets is that to which the people, both urban and rural, have been accustomed, except that the element of corruption is greatly reduced.

17. The branches of the administration in which we are necessarily most backward, and in regard to which our hands are in a great measure tied during the military occupation by military considerations and exigencies, are the Civil Judicial and Civil Medical.

18. As regards the former, Mr. Bonham Carter, the Judicial Officer who was lately appointed from Egypt, has only been with me a short time, but is now getting into the saddle. I have submitted to the India Office a copy of proposals for a temporary judicial system for the Baghdad Vilayet formulated by him in consultation with me. It seems to me just what is required. Meanwhile, such local law and justice as has been essential has been administered by my district Political Officers with simple civil and criminal powers granted them by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief on my recommendation. As a matter of fact, outside the large towns we have been little troubled with civil and commercial suits, incapable of adjustment by compromise through the good

offices of the local Political Officer.

19. As regards the Civil Medical branch. We are almost ready for the separation of the Civil Medical work from that of the Army Medical, and just before I left I raised the question with the Director of Medical Services as to whether the time had not now come for creating a Civil Medical Department with a separate personnel, though still to be under his general supervision. It is under lively consideration. A similar separation has recently been effected in the Department of Civil Posts, but in these matters we are so dependent on the military organisations that we have to defer to their views to a great extent as to when developments are feasible.

20. The extent and the period for which British and Indian Troops will be required after the War is a difficult question for me to answer without discussion with the military authorities, and depends so much on the position in which we are left at the end of the war. In peace times the Turks employed about 20,000 regulars of all arms, and 3,000 gendarmerie for the maintenance of security and order in the Baghdad and Basrah Vilayets. I should say that, for a peace establishment for internal security only, we should require for some time after the war to keep a division in Mesopotamia with one British regiment to a Brigade as at present constituted, and about the same number of gendarmerie, exclusive of 1,000 civil police for the towns. In the course of time we should hope to replace the Indian troops by Arabs, organised on the lines of the Egyptian Army, but it must necessarily take some years. I am not of the opinion that any Indian police will be required, except small levies to begin with to form a nucleus for the training of the indigenous product. I hope that in this field we shall be able to give employment to the Arab ex-officer of the Turkish Army, otherwise this class will be a difficult and malcontent element to deal with.

21. The directions in which we can most usefully direct our energies with a view to popularising our Administration are Irrigation, Education, and

Civil Medical. In all these departments we are alive to the importance of speedy progress and are doing our utmost compatible with existing conditions and with the material at our disposal.

22. The elements that we most need to encourage are: Firstly, the Jewish community in Baghdad. In this connection I recommend that Dr. Weizman be induced, if possible, to pay a visit or send a reliable representative to Baghdad to influence the Jewish community in favour of the British connection. Secondly, the Arab notables and nobility among the townspeople of Baghdad and Basrah. They are a somewhat impecunious and backward element, but one which it is very necessary to encourage and take into our counsels as far as possible. Thirdly, the wealthy landlord element, both Arab and Jew, and the important Shaikhs of the settled tribes. If it becomes a question of obtaining public expression of feeling in favour of British control it can be done; but I think the subject would have to be handled cautiously. The intelligent inhabitants of Iraq at the back of their minds are possessed by the apprehension that Mesopotamia may conceivably be restored to the Turks at the Peace Conference, and as long as this nightmare is present with them we should merely emphasize it by asking them which Government they would prefer. By doing so we should be clearly putting them in a very unfair position because they know well that if they elect for British control and if nevertheless the Turks were ultimately to return, all those who had declared for us would receive short shrift. It will be understood that the rural population of Iraq as a whole is quite inarticulate and can hardly be consulted. As regards the elements who do count, e.g. the Jews and other denominational communities in the large towns, they could without doubt be squared in some form to give expression to the sentiments that we desire. But we must consider and decide what is to be regarded as constituting the representative public opinion which we have to consult.

23. Steps to be taken to consolidate Commercial Influence in Mesopotamia.

The great initial difficulty here is the absence of commercial transport and general scarcity of tonnage and accommodation, and last, but not least, the uncertainty of the future. It is difficult to encourage private enterprise when accommodation for agencies is not available. Sites and land cannot be sold, and machinery cannot be imported.

We are most anxious to encourage trade generally, but to announce that trade to Baghdad is open is to suggest that commercial tonnage both by sea and by river is available and not liable to be requisitioned. Another difficulty is that, owing to the importance of preventing supplies reaching the enemy from the markets of Iraq, we have not only to maintain an external blockade cordon, but have also to limit exports inland from Basrah to the minimum requirements of the towns and communities inside occupied territory. This in itself interferes greatly with the natural flow of trade, yet we can only relax our safeguards with great caution. As a matter of fact, there has quite recently been some easing of the blockade.

P.Z. Cox, Major-General
Civil Commissioner, Baghdad.

LONDON
22nd April 1918

APPENDIX VII¹

THE WAR-MONGERS

"Sack The Lot!"

by Lovat Fraser

The position in this country today is absolutely without precedent. We have on the one hand a Government who still live in a war atmosphere and spend vast sums on war-like purposes while simultaneously imposing heavy fresh taxation for what they are pleased to call "reconstruction". On the other hand we have a nation groaning under the weight of the burdens imposed upon it, but apparently unable to check the Government's mad prodigality with the national finances.

I suggest that to some extent the business community have themselves to thank for the plight in which they are placed. I am aware that various important business associations have made representations to the Government, most of which have been flouted. But taken in bulk the business men lack cohesion.

They are angered and alarmed. They see the dangers which lie ahead. But they are either dazed by the bamboozling speeches of Ministers or they cannot organise the collective energy required to make their influence felt. When I inquired the other day about opinion in the City, the answer I received was: "Anxious but apathetic. Men are immersed in their own affairs, and seem unable to conceive an effective remedy. They are constantly hoping that conditions will improve". If the City of London is really apathetic, then Heaven help the country; because unless something is done to bridle the Government we shall be carried over the precipice.

There are two directions in which public expenditure can and must be curtailed. One is the immense expansion of our bureaucratic system of administration. The other is the enormous liabilities we are incurring through the Government's insane policy in the Middle East. I turn once more

1. Daily Mail, July 12, 1920

to the question of Mesopotamia because I am firmly convinced that if we stop pouring money into that fatal land we shall have plugged up the hole which causes the biggest single drain upon our attenuated resources.

Business men are being misled about Mesopotamia. They hear stories of the fallow cornlands, of the potential supplies of cotton, of the oilfields which are reputed to be inexhaustible. They do not realise that the labour problem in Mesopotamia is incapable of solution on the scale required for large results. They do not perceive that many years must pass before any substantial yield can be expected, and that meanwhile Mesopotamia must be ringed round with defences at an incalculable price. They do not know that every bale of cotton will have cost this country its weight in gold and that the oil will be as expensive as champagne of the Chamberlain brand.

Nobody seems to have noticed Sir Donald Maclean's point that in the two years from April 1, 1919, Mesopotamia will have cost this country little short of £60,000,000. He was quoting the Government figures, which are misleading. If he had said £100,000,000 he would have been nearer the mark.

* * * * *

There is nothing in all our history to compare with our folly in Mesopotamia. Mr. Lloyd George put the population at 2,000,000. Lord Curzon said the official figure was 2,850,000. I have learned to mistrust all official figures from Mesopotamia, but am willing to put the population, men, women and children, at 3,000,000.

What sort of administration have we foisted upon these unfortunate and impecunious people? That ingenuous bull of Bashan, Commander Kenworthy, asked Mr. Montagu the other day how many members of the Indian Civil Service were employed in Mesopotamia, and was told six. The answer was no doubt strictly accurate, for the Indian Civil Service is a corps d'élite, and barely numbers 1,000 all told; but the impression left was entirely misleading.

There are at present employed in Mesopotamia in civil tasks 454 British officials, "almost all of them military and almost all of them British". The figures are Lord Curzon's and the comment is Lord Islington's. Their salaries range from £540 to £3,360 annually. There are sixty civil officers in Mesopotamia today receiving salaries of £1,200 and upwards, presumably exclusive of the "allowances" which bulk so largely in Eastern pay-rolls. Such a record leaves even Sir Eric Geddes standing at the starting-post. No wonder so many officers write letters to the newspapers trying to prove that Mesopotamia is indeed a blessed word. These statistics, be it noted, do not include the host of clerks and other native subordinates.

These salaries are paid by the Arabs we promised to "emancipate", and we are asked to believe that they clamour for more "benefits" at their own expense. If they do they are utterly unlike any Arabs I have ever met or heard of, for the true Arab is impatient of any form of settled government. I am inclined to suspect that these wonderful Arab requests for more "administration" emanate from people who are growing rich out of the tens of millions spent upon the troops.

The "Budget" of Mesopotamia for 1919-20 showed a revenue of £5,500,000, equivalent to nearly £2 per head of the population. In an Oriental country such taxation is almost unheard of. In Great Britain, which was once so rich, our whole pre-war taxation was only £3 10s. 10d. per head. The Turks nominally collected from all sources of revenue in Mesopotamia in 1905 a sum of close upon £3,000,000, out of which they paid for their garrison. Some new taxes were then imposed, which brought the nominal revenue in 1907 to £3,732,000. These figures do not include the gross revenue for the vilayet of Mosul, which amounted in 1907 to £200,000; but in all cases only a portion of these sums was collected.

The Turks chastised the people with whips; it has been reserved to

us to provide the scorpions. The Mesopotamian "Budget" for the present year shows an estimated surplus of £1,000,000. Why are we extorting a million more than is required.

* * * * *

The total export trade of Mesopotamia before the war averaged, roughly, about £1,500,000, and the import trade stood at about the same figure. The exports of Mosul, which are separately returned, amounted to £230,000, and Mosul's imports of European products to £160,000. These statistics relate to a few years before the war, but if you double them, where is the profit when the British taxpayer is spending anything up to £50,000,000 a year in providing troops for the country. We are keeping 80,000 troops in Mesopotamia, and have just sent more to Persia. Our active Air Force in Mesopotamia consists of 90 officers and 620 other ranks, one officer to each seven men!

Lord Milner quotes the case of Egypt, and says that thirty years ago everybody thought the country was going to be "a burden and a failure". Is not Egypt a burden today? The British taxpayer is called upon to find this year £7,543,000 for troops in Egypt, in addition to £6,430,000 for Palestine, and these figures are based on the vague assumption that the garrison will be reduced by one half. Yet Lord Milner declares that "today Egypt is one of the most prosperous countries in the world". If that be true, why is this impoverished land called upon to pay over £7,000,000 for so prosperous a country?

And is not our administration of Egypt a confessed failure? Lord Milner spent half the winter there trying to put things right. And what was one of the main causes of all the trouble? Precisely the same as in Mesopotamia - the multiplication of British officials at high salaries, instead of allowing the people to develop indigenous forms of rule.

There is one answer to all the nonsense talked about Mesopotamia by

our war-mongering Ministers, and it was given by Lord Crewe, who said bluntly, "We simply cannot afford it". Lord Milner said that "our great war in Europe has ended for a year and a half, but war in the East has not ended yet". It will never end while we are governed by a War Ministry which thinks in terms of war, spends on the war scale, is utterly heedless of finance, and imagines shadow Empires in desolate and empty lands.

Lord Curzon says there is little hope of raising an Arab force in Mesopotamia. He "regretfully informed their lordships" that they had hardly found a single Arab capable of holding Government office or any importance; to which I may add that "they" never will find one while there are 454 gazetted British officers in Mesopotamian civil employ. He was emphatic in his determination to keep a substantial British force in North-West Persia.

The conclusion is that we have got to keep on pouring vast sums into these Eastern lands for evermore. Why do not our business men concentrate upon this issue, instead of bleating about the Excess Profits Duty and being hectored in reply by Mr. Chamberlain? Lord Milner says the war is not yet ended. Very well. The only way to end it is to adopt the late Lord Fisher's remedy. ("Sack the Lot!") We should end it then soon enough.

A P P E N D I X V I I I ¹

NOTE BY MISS GERTRUDE BELL

1. We must bear in mind that the movement in this country is one aspect of a very strong nationalist sentiment which existed in embryo before the war and has gained immensely in strength and definition from the very principles in defense of which we fought. For we declared, and as I believe with truth, that we fought for national existence, not our own merely but that of weaker peoples who were unable to defend themselves. It is therefore vain to attribute what we see here to any special pronouncement on the part of the Allies, still more to the machination of any individual or group of individuals. We are in presence of a sentiment the roots of which go further and deeper and touch so to speak the roots of our own action in the greatest trial which we as a nation have known. If I am right in this view it would be obviously absurd to attempt to check developments in Mesopotamia by proceeding against any particular leader or leaders. Even if we could take measures which would temporarily induce silence, we could not crush a universal sentiment and fresh exponents would arise.

2. Nor have we in reality any desire to crush it. The British nation does not wish to be charged indefinitely with the responsibility and expense of holding and administering a reluctant Mesopotamia. We are perfectly genuine when we say that our role is, in our view, confined to that of guardian responsible for the peaceful development of the country till it can walk alone.

3. It is clear that we cannot play this part unless we make ourselves acceptable. We have witnessed the failure of the French in Syria where they were not acceptable. My belief is that the Syrian question will find solution only when the French throw their hand in, which they are bound to do sooner or later for the reason that, even more than ourselves they have neither men nor money to deal with the opposite alternative. I believe very firmly that

1. Private Letters and Papers of Gertrude Bell, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Note dated July 1920.

we can make ourselves acceptable. Our political ideals in the East are fundamentally different from those of the French and our methods are different from any which the French have exhibited in Syria, at any rate. In spite of the long delay in fulfilling our promises which has somewhat exasperated public opinion, there is at bottom a belief among the Arabs that we do not mean to play them false, and there is also a great deal of trust and friendship between individual Arabs and Englishmen.

4. But if, as I anticipate, the French give up the Syrian adventure, we shall need all the natural assets we possess to induce Mesopotamia to accept the control and guidance of which she stands in need. We can, I think, by means of patient and sober (and also sympathetic) demonstration, convince our people that whether or not Syria can stand alone at once, the case of Mesopotamia is different. In Syria, for example the wild tribes lie on the borders, while the interior of the country is mostly settled, here we have nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples almost every where in our midst. Orderly Government was far better understood in Turkish times in Syria than in Mesopotamia; here they have much to learn.

5. I do not think that during the last 8 months - I speak of the period in which I have been present since my return from England - we have made the most of our advantage.

(a) We have done little or nothing to show that we intended to fulfil the promises made at home. Municipal Councils without responsibility, Divisional councils equally without responsibility were not sufficient and have as a matter of fact made no impression on the public. This is what they really mean when they complain of the continuance of Military administration. They are not thinking of the autocratic authority of the soldiers but of that of the politicals.

(b) We have made no attempt to understand the Syrian position; we have not tried to enter into direct relations with Faisal or the Damascus Government; we have lumped together all the wild propaganda on the Euphrates as

Sharifian without discriminating between what was done by order or against the orders of Damascus and we have not encouraged the desire of Mesopotamian officers of intelligence and capacity to return to this country though they have repeatedly expressed their desire to do so. We feared that when they get back we should have no job to offer them. Nor should we, under the system which we have been pursuing, but the fault lay with the system. If we had brought them back and found employment for them, their presence here would have been a final and conclusive answer to the Dair propaganda.

6. We have now to tide over a period of 4 months before our promises are put into execution. It will not be easy. So far as possible we should be busy with making preparations, always in consultation with the people themselves. Such matters as the electoral basis, I suggest might be discussed. I trust that some of the Mesopotamians in Syria will be invited to return - such is, I understand, the intention. But when they come they must be set to work, their hands must not be left idle. Ja'far Pasha might begin to work out wider developments of the Levies for instance, i.e. the scheme of an Arab Army. Above all they must be treated sympathetically and placed on the footing of friends and equals and this applies as much to our local leaders. Every thing now depends on the spirit in which they are handled.

7. That being so, I suggest that if we could enlist the services of some of the British officers who were working in Syria it would be very helpful. I saw a remarkable spirit of friendship and co-operation between them and the Arab leaders. This is the atmosphere we want. We already have Captain Clayton, Captain Wadman and above all Colonel Brayne who has now returned to India, are the men whose names occur to me in addition.

8. Our sole object, I take it, is to pass through this difficult period successfully without open dissensions, which leave lasting sores. I am convinced that it can be done. None, or very few of the men who are now out against us are villains. Saiyid Mhd. Sadr is an intelligent and at bottom

a sensible man. Yusuf Suwaidi has repeatedly assured me that Mesopotamia needs foreign guidance. Their present attitude is due to exasperation and it is my belief that they are already beginning to see that they have been very foolish. If they want to go to England, by all means let them. It will give us the necessary breathing space. But we must use it, I repeat to regain the confidence which to some extent we have lost.

A P P E N D I X I X

NAMES OF IRAQI TOWNS THAT EMERGED IN THE
SECOND HALF OF THE 19th CENTURY

al 'Amārah	1861	Qal'at Sukar	1873
'Alī al Gharbi	1864	al Ṣhaṭrah	1873
Qal'at Sālīh	1868	Abu Ṣukhaīr	1875
al Maḥmoudiyah	1868	al Rifā'i	1893
al Kut	1869	al Shāmiyah	1879
al Hindiyah	1870		
al Ramādi	1870		
al Nāṣiriyah	1870		
al Ṣuwaiyrah	1872		

A P P E N D I X X¹

No 34436
75/19

OFFICE OF THE CIVIL COMMISSIONER

BAGHDAD. THE 15th NOVEMBER 1919.

From:-

Bt.Lieut.Colonel.A.T.Wilson,C.S.I.C.M.G.C.I.E.D.S.O.

Acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia.

Baghdad.

To:-

The Secretary of State for India,

India Office. Whitehall. London. S.W.1.

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose herewith an interesting and valuable note by Miss G.L. Bell.C.B.E. entitled "Syria in 1919".

A few comments thereon in so far as it directly affects these territories are perhaps called for from me.

2. The fundamental assumption throughout this note and, I should add, throughout recent official correspondence which has reached me from London, is that an Arab State in Mesopotamia and elsewhere within a short period of years is a possibility, and that the recognition or creation of a logical scheme of Government on these lines, in supercession of those on which we are now working in Mesopotamia would be practicable and popular, in other words, the assumption is that the Anglo-French Declaration of November 8th 1918 represents a practical line of policy to pursue in the near future.

3. My observations in this country and elsewhere have forced me to the conviction that this assumption is erroneous, and though I am aware that

in holding this view I differ from authorities and observers both at home and abroad who possess a breadth of vision and a wealth of experience to which I can lay no claim, I venture, probably for the last time, in my present capacity, to lay before H.M.'s Government the considerations which have led me to this conclusion.

4. I believe it to be impossible in these days to create a new sovereign Mohammedan State by diplomatic or Administrative means out of the remnants of the Turkish Empire.

5. On local grounds because I believe the sentiments of the majority of Mohammedans in this country to be hostile to any practical interpretations of such a conception that we can devise. The warlike Kurds in Mesopotamia who number nearly half a million will never accept an Arab ruler and they are potentially a powerful disruptive force. The Shiah of Mesopotamia, who number about 1 3/4 millions, will accept no form of Arab Government based upon Sunni domination, & no form of Arab Government has yet been envisaged, except the Divisional and Provincial councils provisionally approved and now in process of formation, which would not involve a practical monopoly of power by Sunnis. As far as I know the Young Baghdadi party in Syria does not include amongst its members a single Shiah.

The Shiah Community would be reluctant to see the Turks return - but a Turkish Administration would have less difficulty in asserting itself in the provinces than an Arab Government: the tradition of the past 200 years and the prestige of the Sultanate and Caliphate are still strong.

6. If an Arab Government were constituted by decree of the League of Nations or by other extraneous authority, and maintained for a period by our arms and our money, it is my belief that the Arab public at large would after a very few years actively favour the return of the Turks to the continuance of an amateur Arab Government. The Jewish and Christian Communities who number about 200,000 but have an influence disproportionate to their numbers would probably adopt a similar attitude: such a demand

would be most difficult to combat and might spread to practically the whole of the former Turkish Empire. It is not improbable that the British commercial communities in Mesopotamia would lend such a movement their support, in their own immediate interests.

7. Three quarters of the population of this country are tribes people with no previous tradition of obedience to any Government except that of Constantinople and with an almost instinctive hostility to Arab "Effendis" in positions of authority: this hostility has been repeatedly demonstrated during the past 2 years in Mesopotamia.

I therefore regard the creation of an Arab Government on the lines advocated by Yasin Pasha and Naji Bey as inconsistent with effective British Administration or indeed with effective control of any sort. For some years to come the appointment of Arab Governors or high officials except of an advisory capacity would involve the rapid decay of authority, law and order, followed by anarchy, and disorder, and the movement once started would not be checked: fanaticism not nationalism would become the ruling motive. Our financial stability depends on our ability to collect taxes, and if revenue paying districts do not accept the Government that we set up we shall at once be bankrupt. We must therefore go slowly. Effective British Administration is vital to the continued existence of Mesopotamia as an independent state or administrative entity.

8. The disruptive forces at work all over the world are not less active in the Middle East than elsewhere: if we raise numbers of the Sharifian family to prominence in the Arab countries we shall have before long to support them by force of arms against a formidable group of dissentients, Bin Saud, Bin Rashid, The Imam, The Idrisi, and other Arabian potentates will never recognise their supremacy and within a few years will be in active opposition: nor can the Sharifian family reckon on popular or democratic support.

9. To sum up, I believe that any form of Administration that we adopt based upon the conception of an Arab state is bound within a few years to

result in the retrocession of a considerable part, if not the whole of Mesopotamia to the one Islamic Power which still commands general respect viz Turkey, unless we are prepared to utilize our armed forces to support an ineffective and unpopular indigenous administration against its internal and external enemies.

10. The probable effect of the creation of an Arab State on Persia also merits consideration. The fresh responsibilities which we have recently assumed in Persia depend in my view for their successful initiation and execution upon the existence of an effective British Administration in Mesopotamia.

11. To revert to the all important Kurdish question, which fills much of our local horizon at present.

It is very noticeable that Turkish propaganda during the past 12 months has been little in evidence amongst the Arab elements of Mesopotamia but has been exceedingly active amongst the Kurds, who number approximately from one third to one-quarter of the total population of the 3 Wilayats.

The repatriation of Christians, the repeated announcements of European Statesmen regarding an Armenian State, the action of European Powers at Smyrna and elsewhere are all subjects which Turkey has not failed to turn to our disadvantage. The fresh graves of 5 Political Officers scattered along the Northern Border of the Mosul Wilayet testify to the success of this propaganda, nor have we yet seen its full development.

12. The atmosphere of resentment thus created has been favourable to the spread of Turkish pan Islamic doctrines against which we have no effective antidote: our promises to Armenians, the arrests of Kurds by British Military Officers in Syria, Aintab, Urfa and elsewhere, Greek aggression in Smyrna, these are facts which our qualified assurances to Kurds do not go far to counterbalance. More recently the behaviour of French troops in Syria, and elsewhere and the pro-Armenian attitude of United States' representatives, have tended to harden popular feeling against us as the representatives of

an Anti-Moslem League.

In this atmosphere it is difficult if not impossible to create the fringe of autonomous Kurdish States which has been authorised, and indeed until the Northern Boundary of Mesopotamia has been decided on, it is difficult if not impossible to give the local Chiefs such assurances as will justify them in throwing in their lot with us.

13. Our financial stake in this country is now so great that we are, it seems to me, committed, in our own national interests, to a degree of responsibility in relation to its affairs which must inevitably conflict sharply with the early creation even in name of an Arab Administration.

British capital sunk in this country at the end of 1919 may be estimated as follows:-

	£ Million.
Miscellaneous Assets including Port (Hewett's report) to be transferred to Civil Administration)	2
Railway (excluding assets of Baghdad Railways)...	8½
Road to Kazbin	½
British Commercial capital at present locked up in country (Shipping, banks and trade).....	5

The above estimate takes no account of military expenditure.

14. The capitalized value of the oil fields may be taken as £50,000,000 at a low valuation. Other minerals, coal, copper, iron etc. are known to exist in Kurdistan (Sulaimaniyah region).

15. Imports uncertainty and shipping difficulties notwithstanding have trebled since 1913 and now stand at £16,000,000 per annum of which £10,000,000 is from the U.K. Shortage of shipping and high freights have prevented the growth of exports which stand for the last 12 months at £9,000,000.

These figures include transit trade.

16. At the present moment there are in Mesopotamia about 200 British Officials of Civil Administration of whom 60.

have their families with them (excluding Railways and other quasi military Depts).

120 British born subjects belonging to British commercial firms of whom about 40 have their families with them.

200 British born subjects in subordinate positions in the Civil Administration (excluding Railways and other quasi military Depts.)

80 ditto. with Commercial Firms.

50 European Foreign subjects.

4000 to 5000 Indians drawing over Rs.200 in the employ of the Civil Administration or of British firms or in business on their own account or in the employ of native firms.

This excludes Labour Corps personnel.

The presence of this large body of British and Foreign subjects in the country involves H.M.G. and its representative on the spot in great responsibilities and cannot be without effect upon the attitude to be adopted towards constitutional experiments.

17. The currency of this country consists of Indian Currency Notes to the value of about 20 crores of rupees and current rupees and small coin to the value of about 7 crores together with about £4,000,000 in Turkish gold which is scarcely in circulation.

The reserve of coin which is held in Mesopotamia against the local current Indian Currency Notes is about $\frac{1}{2}$ crore of rupees a figure considerably below the safe minimum.

Any diminution in the authority of Government would shake the local financial edifice to its foundations and would involve widespread disaster to British and local trade interests.

18. I readily recognise that there are many other factors besides those referred to above requiring the consideration of His Majesty's Government, many of which are necessarily beyond my purview.

I have nevertheless ventured to place the foregoing local aspects of the question before Government in the hope that it may yet be possible for H.M.G. not to commit itself to a policy which must in the practically unanimous opinion of its Officers in this country and of the local public

operate disastrously to the interests of this Country.

19. I believe that the Divisional and Provincial Councils provisionally sanctioned and now in process of formation, if allowed to develop and assisted to assume a due share of local responsibility will in a comparatively short space of time give the public at large that measure of participation and control of their local destinies which is necessary to ensure stability of the administration, and will serve as a training ground for the development of administrative talent which may fit the people of these countries ultimately to control their own destinies. Many years will not elapse before the people of this Country will be at least as well equipped as the people of Egypt or India now are for Western forms of Government, but for the present the population is so deeply divided by racial and religious cleavages, and the Shiah majority after 200 years of Sunni domination are so little accustomed to hold high Office that any attempt to introduce institutions on the lines desired by the advanced Sunni Politicians of Syria would involve the concentration of power in the hands of a few persons whose ambitions and methods would rapidly bring about the collapse of organized Government.

20. Finally if I may be permitted to make a personal reference, I beg leave to assure Government that by birth, by training and by temperament, I am in sympathy with a democratic as opposed to a bureaucratic conception of Government, and if I find myself unable to advocate the immediate introduction of a logical scheme of Arab Government into Mesopotamia it is because I believe that the results would be the antithesis of a democratic Government and that the creation and maintenance at this stage of an indigenous Arab Government is inconsistent with the changes which we are now endeavouring to introduce into the G. of India and Egypt, changes the necessity for which I fully recognise and with which I am broadly speaking in sympathy.

I have sent a copy of this letter with enclosures to the G. of India.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient Servant.

(sgd) A.T. Wilson
Lieut-Colonel, I.A.
Acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia

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